

# National evaluation of Diplomas:

## Preparation for 2009 delivery

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## Executive summary

### Background

The introduction of the Diplomas for 14-19 year olds is a central part of the government's reform of 14-19 education and represents a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. The Diplomas are delivered by a consortium which includes schools, colleges, training providers, employers and higher education institutions. They will be offered at three levels and across 17 lines of learning which are being implemented in four phases (from September 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011). The first five lines of learning started in 2008 (Gateway 1) were: Construction and the Built Environment; Engineering; Information Technology; Creative and Media; and Society, Health and Development. The second five lines of learning delivered from September 2009 (Gateway 2) were: Business, Administration and Finance; Hair and Beauty Studies; Hospitality; Environmental and Land-based Studies and Manufacturing and Product Design.

In January 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of Exeter to conduct the national evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas over the period 2008-2013. This summary focuses on the findings of the research into the experience of preparation for implementation and delivery of Diplomas in the first ten lines of learning from September 2009. It presents the findings from baseline case-study visits (conducted between February and May 2009) to 15 of the consortia delivering from September 2009. Six of these consortia already had experience of planning for Diploma delivery from September 2008 but the remaining nine were engaged in planning for delivery of these new qualifications for the first time.

### Key Findings

- Consortia felt that they would be ready to deliver lines of learning approved to commence in September 2009, which was largely due to having ensured that they had involved staff with skills, expertise and enthusiasm for Diplomas and their specialist subject. Nevertheless, consortia managers predicted that take-up of Diplomas for September 2009 would be lower than was originally anticipated.
- There was some evidence of a broader additional and specialist learning offer than had been the case for delivery commencing in 2008.
- On the whole training and support provided were received more positively by staff in the consortia visited in 2009 than had been the case among those visited in 2008.
- The majority of consortia had put in place a consortium-wide strategy for Diploma-related Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), but it was not necessarily adopted by all institutions and there was scope for more consistent IAG to be provided within the consortium.

### Preparations for Diploma delivery

The consortia felt that they would be ready to deliver lines of learning approved to commence in September 2009 because they had skilled staff with expertise and enthusiasm for Diplomas and their specialist subject. Additionally, their readiness

was the result of the hard work of line of learning leads, facilitated by having time to plan for delivery and attend relevant training and by sharing ideas/practice with other consortia.

### **How was preparation for delivery progressing?**

Consortia staff recognised that they needed to address certain challenges before full Diploma implementation including: establishing shared protocols, understanding and planning for the assessment of the Diploma, engaging employers and addressing logistical arrangements. Consortia would welcome clarity over funding to address future capacity, sustainability and employer engagement. Additionally, Level 1 and post-16 Diplomas were not universally offered. The implications of this for young people's progression on to higher level Diplomas will be worthy of further investigation, although it is acknowledged that other progression routes for Diploma learners are available.

There was some evidence of a broader additional and specialist learning offer than in consortia that commenced delivery in 2008. Challenges existed in terms of functional skills. It is recognised that young people might do well in other areas of the Diploma but might find functional skills too demanding. Guidance is needed so that links can be made between functional skills and other elements of the Diploma, in order for learners to recognise the relevance of the skills and be able to apply them.

### **What was take up of Diplomas in 2009 likely to be?**

Consortia managers predicted that take-up of Diplomas for September 2009 would be lower than was originally anticipated. Contributing factors were: an absence of comprehensive and consistent IAG for young people, a lack of current coherent collaboration and trust between institutions and the strength of some current competing qualifications in niche areas. However, this should be considered in the context of consortia which were still developing and evolving prior to the delivery of Diplomas.

### **To what extent were training and support meeting staff needs?**

On the whole training and support provided were received more positively by staff in the consortia visited in 2009 than had been the case among those visited in 2008. Consortium leads were generally positive about training provided especially in terms of one-to-one support from consultants. Line of learning leads appreciated 'packages' of generic and specific training particularly when the timing facilitated consolidation of learning. At institutional level there appeared to be scope for further training and support for careers coordinators and other staff from whom young people might seek guidance about their qualification choices.

### **What information, advice and guidance strategies were in place?**

The majority of consortia had put in place a consortium-wide strategy for IAG, but it was not necessarily adopted by all institutions and there was scope for more consistent IAG to be provided within the consortium. Strong and clear communication from the consortium lead to the institutions relating to IAG and the Diplomas is vital to ensure learners across the consortium receive accurate, consistent and comprehensive IAG. In terms of recruitment there was some emerging evidence that there might be a case for consortium-wide Diploma entry requirements at each level so learners had similar prior levels of attainment. Additionally, there is a need for further information for parents, so they can advise and support their children in making their choices.

## Infrastructure to support Diploma delivery

Evidence from the 15 consortia starting delivery of the phase 2 five lines of learning in September 2009 revealed that, although some progress had been made in terms of providing the underpinning infrastructure and collaborative cohesion necessary for Diploma delivery, there is scope for further improvement.

### How cohesive was collaboration in Gateway 2 consortia?

All the case-study consortia have undertaken the first steps on the journey to fully collaborative ways of working but, at this stage in the process, they have yet to complete the journey. On the whole, interviewees accepted that cohesion was difficult to achieve; preparation for Diploma delivery in 2009 highlighted the challenges of communication and consortia management as more lines of learning increase the complexity of delivery. In the majority of case-study consortia there was less evidence of cohesion than had been the case among the case-study consortia that commenced delivery in 2008<sup>1</sup>, possibly because those involved in earlier delivery were more ready to embrace the change that the implementation of Diplomas represents in terms of partnership working. However, consortia preparing for 2009 delivery were optimistic that cohesion would happen, given time, and that they were working to achieve this.

### How can the supporting infrastructure be enhanced?

If consortia delivering from 2009 are more cautious in their view of working collaboratively, it may take time to overcome some of the challenges they are experiencing and to identify the extent of any benefits for each institution, and for their learners, from working collaboratively.

The evidence suggests that the future development of the infrastructure to deliver Diplomas would be further enhanced by: unity of purpose; rapid but sound decision-making; networking in order to share emerging good practice; and developing trust and commitment to the 'shared vision' of enabling young people in any institution to access a subject area or way of learning that most closely meets their interests.

## Recommendations for policy and practice

In order to strengthen the processes needed for Diploma delivery the evidence from the evaluation suggests the following recommendations:

- considering ways to further support consortia and institutions to ultimately achieve a fully collaborative spirit. Firm, flexible leadership, clarity of vision, effective communication at all levels, widespread commitment at all levels and trust is needed to provide cohesive collaboration to deliver Diplomas.
- enhancing institutions' understanding of the Diplomas, including the importance of the collaborative model of delivery, in order to gain full commitment. This could be achieved through further dissemination of good practice and success stories from consortia who commenced delivery in 2008. For example, a common theme emerged from current Diploma learners that they liked the methods of learning and appreciated the opportunity to study a broad spectrum of different disciplines

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<sup>1</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

within a Diploma. Further it is recommended that practitioners are adequately involved in the planning process so that they have ownership of this change and feel prepared for delivery.

- exploring the possibility of aligning the Level 1 Diploma more with Level 2 so that guided learning hours are similar and the equivalent of a maximum of grade C at GCSE could be achieved thereby eliminating concerns over progression. Decisions over when to enter a student for Level 1 or 2 could then be made at an advanced stage of the course.
- integrating relevant details about Diplomas into information that is disseminated to all staff at both a national and local level could help staff to advise young people. In addition, raising awareness in institutions about Diploma training and providing accessible and brief information that can be easily absorbed by busy teaching and guidance staff is recommended.
- encouraging institutions to adopt a collaborative approach to Diploma delivery by attaching increased weight to 14 -19 and Diploma collaborative good practice in inspection criteria. This could include an assessment of an area's progress in implementing the 14 - 19 reforms comprising evidence of whether students were fully informed of all the options (including Diplomas) open to them.

### **Recommendations for consortia:**

- placing greater emphasis on the delivery of IAG in terms of: consistency across the consortium's institutions; improved articulation of the features of the Diploma qualification: the different elements and the styles of learning employed; and detailed information on the content of the different lines of learning. There would also be value in consortia identifying and disseminating the policies and entry criteria, as well as the views, of HEIs in relation to the Diploma (particularly to parents and teachers who often influence learners' choices) so that those young people who are considering progressing to Higher Education are able to make an informed decision about taking a Diploma.
- providing potential Diploma learners with a better understanding of the different elements including details of the principal learning, additional and specialist learning, and the project so that, with guidance, students can appreciate the breadth of the potential subjects within the Diploma (and concurrent subjects studied alongside the Diploma) and make their own informed choice.
- further supporting Diploma teachers by signposting and, where possible finding funding for, relevant training opportunities.
- building further on the emerging cross-consortium communication and joint delivery of lines of learning by sharing practice and disseminating success within the consortium to, for example, other lines of learning which have not adopted this approach or to schools which have yet to be convinced about implementing shared delivery.

These actions would go some way to assisting the full integration of Diplomas into the 14 - 19 learning landscape.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The introduction of Diplomas for 14-19 year olds is a central part of the government's reform of 14-19 education and represents a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. Approximately 12,000 young people commenced Diploma courses in the first phase of delivery in September 2008. The Diploma consists of three main components:

- **Principal learning:** sector-related knowledge and underpinning skills needed to progress in relevant sectors.
- **Generic learning:** functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT, development of personal, learning and thinking skills, and a Project or Extended Project.
- **Additional/specialist learning:** additional subjects that offer the opportunity to study a particular topic in more depth or to study something different that widens the learner experience, such as another language, for example. Additional and specialist learning aims to broaden horizons and to help open up lots of different opportunities in future study and employment.

Diplomas also include learning in the workplace (a minimum of ten days' work experience), and learning through realistic work environments, to enable the development of practical skills and work-related application of learning.

The Diplomas are being offered at three levels and across 17 lines of learning, and are being implemented in four phases. For each phase of implementation, consortia (of schools, colleges, training providers, employers and higher education institutions (HEIs)) have to submit an application to DCSF for each line of learning they want to offer. This application process is known as the Gateway.

<b>Phase 1 lines of learning</b> Construction and the Built Environment Engineering Information Technology Creative and Media Society, Health and Development	Introduced in September 2008
<b>Phase 2 lines of learning</b> Business, Administration and Finance Hair and Beauty Studies Hospitality Environmental and Land-based Studies Manufacturing and Product Design	Introduced in September 2009
<b>Phase 3 lines of learning</b> Public Services Retail Business Sport and Active Leisure Travel and Tourism	To be introduced in September 2010
<b>Phase 4 lines of learning</b> Science Languages and International Communication Humanities and Social Sciences	It is planned that the last three lines of learning will be introduced from 2011.

In January 2008, the DCSF commissioned the NFER and the University of Exeter to conduct the national evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas over the period 2008-2013. The formative elements of this evaluation offer an opportunity to refine the Diplomas as they develop, and could be considered as key evidence when the 14-19 qualification offer is reviewed in 2013.

## 1.2 Aims and objectives

The overall purpose of the national evaluation is to provide policy makers and practitioners with systematic and robust evidence which will enable them to make informed judgements about the outcomes of the Diplomas for different stakeholders and to make improvements to design and delivery, if appropriate. The evaluation has two main aims:

- to review the **implementation and delivery** of the Diplomas – in terms of the processes and factors facilitating or hindering successful implementation; the structural issues related to design and content; and the systems for planning, organising and resourcing provision and supporting progression
- to assess the **impact** of the Diplomas on young people – in terms of their participation in education and training; attainment of qualifications; and progression to further and higher education, training and employment.

The evaluation will also gather the perceptions and experiences of the Diplomas from a range of stakeholders including young people, parents, teachers, employers and higher education staff.

## 1.3 Research methods

The overall research design for the evaluation provides a complementary mixed-method approach to address the complex range of issues and aims associated with the implementation of the Diplomas. The study has three main strands:

- **Surveys of a range of stakeholders:** in each phase of the evaluation (coinciding with each phase of Diploma implementation which commence in September 2008, 2009 and 2010), these include a telephone survey of consortium leads; longitudinal tracking surveys of learners and cross-sectional surveys of teaching staff and parents in a sample of 30 consortia; and surveys of HEIs. Two surveys of employers will also be undertaken in 2010 and 2012.
- **A longitudinal programme of qualitative case studies:** comprising visits to 15 consortia in each of the three phases of implementation. Within each of the consortia selected, visits to up to four institutions will take place and interviews will be conducted with strategic and operational staff, learners and consortium partners.
- **Statistical analysis of external datasets** such as the Diploma Aggregation Service, the National Pupil Dataset (NPD) and the Individual Learner Record (ILR), to explore the outcomes and impact of the Diplomas on a larger scale than would be possible through surveys or qualitative data collection.

This report focuses on the planning and preparation for Diplomas prior to introduction by Gateway 2 consortia in September 2009, and presents findings from baseline case-study visits to a sample of consortia.

## Sample

The sample of 15 consortia case-studies was selected to ensure that the following were covered:

- **Lines of learning and levels:** to ensure that all lines of learning, at all three levels, were represented
- **Number of lines of learning:** to include Gateway 2 consortia offering different numbers of lines of learning from Phase 1 and 2
- **Geography:** to ensure a geographical spread across the Government Office Regions (GORs), including rural and urban areas
- **Partnership structure and delivery models:** to ensure that the sample included different types of institutions involved in delivery, different partnership structures and models of delivery (for example, pre-existing and new partnerships and different types of institution involved in delivery).

The case-study sample included consortia in all nine GORs and a mixture of urban, rural areas, and types of LAs. All the lines of learning were represented across the consortia. Further details about the case-study sample are provided in Appendix A.

Case-study visits were conducted between March and June 2009. The main purpose of these visits was to explore in depth the early implementation of Diplomas, their planned delivery models, and the extent to which consortia felt prepared for delivery. The visits also examined learners' understanding and perceptions of Diplomas, the information they had received about Diplomas, and the reasons for choosing to undertake a Diploma or not.

Each consortium case-study comprised visits to up to four institutions planning Diploma delivery in September 2009. Typically, schools and post-16 providers (including FE colleges and sixth form colleges) were included. Interviews took place with staff in a range of roles. These included consortium leads, line of learning leads, faculty and department heads, senior managers responsible for curriculum development, teachers responsible for information, advice and guidance (IAG) and learners in Years 9 and 11. Where possible, learners who had opted for a Diploma course were interviewed individually, while group interviews took place with those who had not chosen to take a Diploma. Details of the institutions and the interviews achieved are presented in Appendix B. Numbers of Year 11 learners were lower than anticipated. This partly reflected the lower take-up nationally of post-16 Diplomas (indeed, five of the 15 consortia transpired not to be offering any post-16 Diplomas, thereby reducing the probability of achieving Year 11 Diploma learners by one third) and was partly due to a delay whilst consortia leads identified institutions that would be delivering the new lines of learning. Fieldwork then coincided with Year 11 study leave which impacted on availability of Year 11 learners to interview.

The views of staff and young people are presented in this report. In relation to some aspects, the number of consortia where a view was expressed is given. This is to provide some guidance on the extent of an experience or approach within the 15 case-study consortia. However, in considering these figures, it is worth taking into

consideration that, during the interviews, interviewees were not all asked identical questions with a set range of responses, as they would be on a questionnaire. Rather, the views expressed in response to a semi-structured set of interview questions will reflect the issues, priorities, concerns and context for each interviewee.

Comparisons have been drawn, where relevant, with findings presented in the report on preparation for the 2008 delivery of phase 1 Diplomas.

## 1.4 Structure of the report

**Chapter 2** of the report examines the structure and management of Gateway 2 consortia. It also explores perceptions of the factors that facilitate or inhibit consortium effectiveness and cohesion.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the models of Diploma delivery planned in consortia teaching from September 2009, and the factors facilitating and hindering preparedness for Diploma delivery.

**Chapter 4** provides an overview of the national, consortium and institution-level strategies adopted to promote the Diploma and to give learners information, advice and guidance about their choice to study for a Diploma. It also examines the learners' experiences of the IAG received. The impact of the IAG on learners' knowledge and understanding of Diplomas is also discussed.

**Chapter 5** examines the extent of learner take-up of Diplomas, the extent to which, if at all, learners have been targeted, and the factors which have influenced young people's decision to take a Diploma or not.

The range and type of training and support offered and received by staff across consortia are discussed in **Chapter 6**, as well as views on further training and support needs.

An overview of the key findings to date, and the key implications emerging for policy-makers, for Gateway 1 and 2 consortia and for future consortia delivering Diplomas, are presented in **Chapter 7**.

## 2. Consortium Management

### Key findings

- Gateway 2 consortia (both new consortia and those already delivering through Gateway 1) had adopted a similar management structure to that identified among the Gateway 1 case studies, with strategic and operational levels and specialist groups where these were considered useful.
- There was evidence of a move towards sub-division of consortia into groups of partner institutions, or 'hubs', or into districts in large city areas. Although this helped to facilitate travel arrangements and simplify implementation, it is possible that this could limit access to some lines of learning in some areas.
- Structural and organisational changes and the extra lines of learning in consortia were creating a need for more responsive systems of communication.
- Gateway 2 interviewees identified the same factors that facilitated an effective consortium as the Gateway 1 case studies. These were firm, but flexible leadership, clarity of aims, and good communication between strategic and operational groups. The absence of these led to slow progress in implementation and poor commitment to collaboration.
- Liaison and networking with more experienced consortia about management arrangements and effective delivery had been useful, but appear to have been on a fairly limited scale.
- There was less evidence of cohesion, based on effective partnership working, within the Gateway 2 consortium case studies than there had been for Gateway 1. It is worth noting that all Gateway 1 case-study consortia were reasonably well-established in terms of partnership working (for example in the Increased Flexibility Programme or 14-19 Pathfinders). Four of the 15 Gateway 2 consortia reported progress in collaboration, but the majority faced challenges relating to the apparent reluctance of institutions to commit fully to partnership working and lack of the 'shared vision' that helped to overcome challenges.

### Recommendations

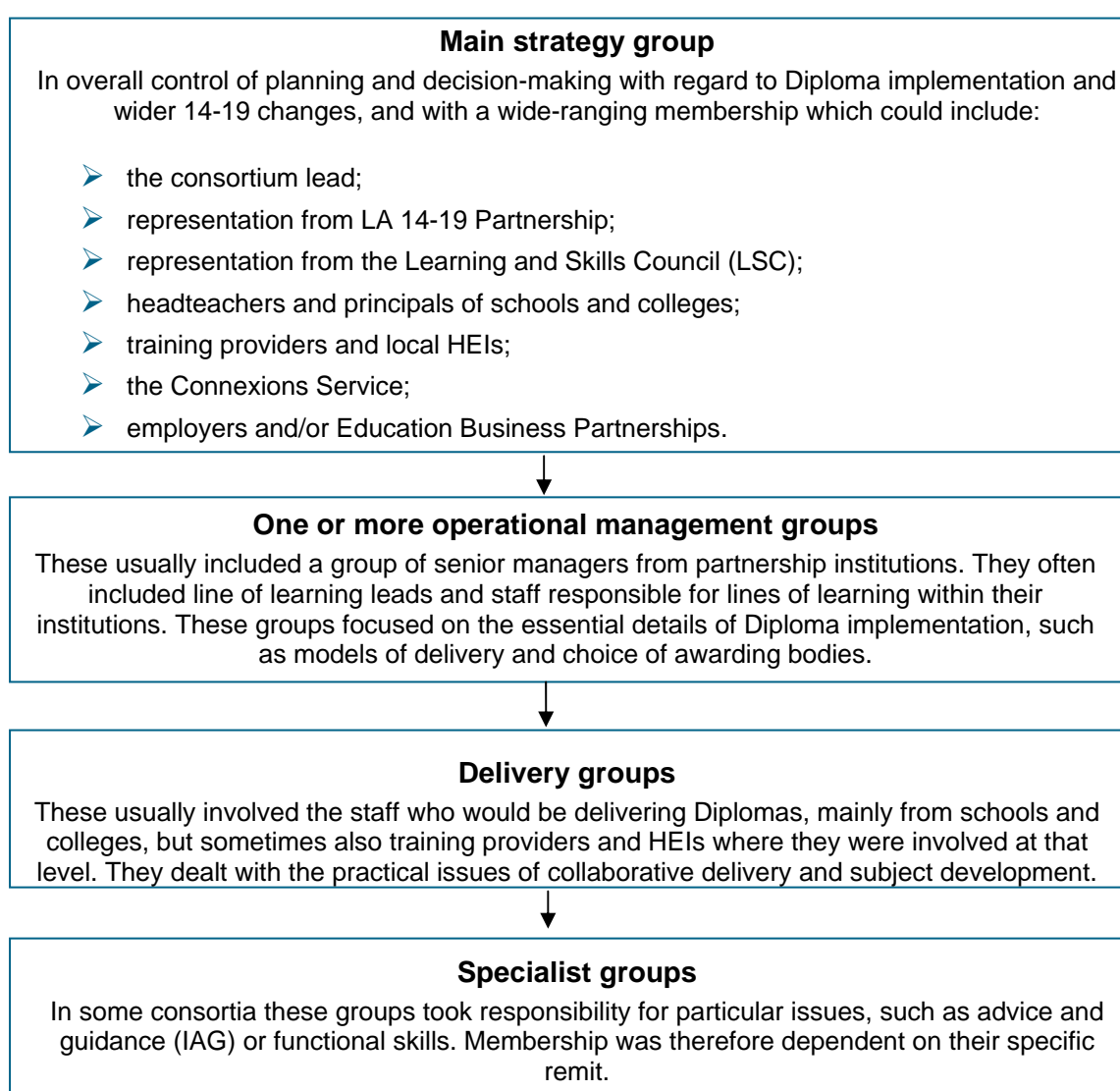
- There would be value in establishing a centrally organised mechanism for transfer of knowledge and experience from Gateway 1 consortia to new consortia. This would provide practical examples of how to overcome challenges, for example of collaboration between institutions, or the facilitation of good lines of communication between the various layers of consortium management. Although Gateway 1 consortia will not always have a solution for all challenges, their level of experience would often be helpful to those just beginning delivery. A mentoring system between experienced and newer consortium leads could be particularly beneficial.

This chapter examines the management structure of Gateway 2 consortia, as well as their effectiveness and cohesion. It is based on interviews with consortium leads (staff with overall responsibility for leading the Gateway 2 consortia), line of learning leads and senior institutional managers in the 15 Gateway 2 case-study areas. In six of these consortia, Diploma delivery had started in September 2008, but the majority were Gateway 2 only consortia.

## 2.1 Consortium management structures

It might be expected that Gateway 2 consortia would adopt a similar overall approach to consortium management as was found in Gateway 1<sup>2</sup> and this was generally the case, although with local variations.

**Figure 1: Gateway 1 consortia management**



<sup>2</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

Although the model of consortium management established or operating in the Gateway 2 case-study areas was broadly similar to Gateway 1 consortia, there were some developments which were more distinctive of consortium management in this second phase of delivery. Key differences are presented below.

**Sub-division within consortia** - There appeared to be a tendency to sub-divide some consortia into areas that operated either as sectors within large cities, or as groups of partner institutions (usually described as hubs). Although the consortium retained its overall structure, the size of some consortia, or particular challenges within the transport systems, made this sub-division a practical solution for the implementation of Diplomas and other 14-19 developments. For example, in one metropolitan city consortium, there were five areas where partners worked together, which effectively made the consortium a confederation of partnerships. In another large and predominantly rural area, the consortium was sub-divided into two districts, each with its own consortium lead, although to streamline management procedures, one lead took the strategic role, and the other took a more operational role. Three other consortia had adopted a 'hub' approach, where a group of institutions based in a geographical area, worked together. Such arrangements were seen as a pragmatic approach and were generally regarded positively, although it is possible that where some lines of learning are only available in some areas of a consortium, this could restrict learner choice.

**Cross-consortium working** - In this second year of the implementation of Diplomas, there were more examples of cross-consortium, and cross-LA, communication and joint development of lines of learning. Such cross-border developments were seen as increasing the choice of 14-19 courses for young people, although this was dependent on adequate transport links. As discussed in Chapter 3, a minority of consortium leads acknowledged that they might need to link with another consortium in order to offer all lines of learning in preparation for the overall 2013 offer, but were concerned about the logistical challenges of doing so.

**Changes to the management structure** – Developing and managing an increasing number of Diploma lines of learning alongside other 14-19 pathways also appeared to be leading to some structural changes to accommodate the increased complexity. In at least ten consortia, line of learning leads reported that they were not involved in strategic decision-making. Additionally, in a minority of cases changes in structure had led to increased layers of management, which was reported to have had the effect of slowing down the process by which decisions passed from the top to the operational management groups.

Overall, with the speed of 14-19 change increasing, the evidence suggests that it is important that the appropriate people are involved in decision-making and good lines of communication are maintained to ensure effective consortium management. This was confirmed by those line of learning leads who did play a part in strategic development, usually because they were also institutional senior managers, such as vice principals, or assistant headteachers. Several described how important it was to act as 'middlemen', facilitating communication between strategy groups and those implementing Diplomas, as this senior manager explained:

*I take ideas to the steering group and as they have curriculum power, they make decisions and feed them back to me, but I'm also on the practitioners' group and if they have questions, I can act as go-between.*



### 2.1.1 Learning from Gateway 1 experience

Case-study consortia that had been delivering since 2008 had been able to apply lessons learnt from their experience. For example, a consortium lead explained that there had been some structural streamlining since the first year:

*Any sub-groups that exist have a very clear remit and focus – we had too many groups and we feel that we have tightened that up considerably.*

Additionally, those previously involved in Gateway 1 had had more time to establish their functional skills teaching approaches, such as in terms of planning to embed the skills, where possible, in principal learning (see chapter 3).

For consortia that had no Gateway 1 experience however (nine of the 15 case-study areas), there seem to have been limited opportunities for learning from the consortia that had been delivering Diplomas since 2008. In one of these, the consortium lead reported having based their 14-19 model on that of a 14-19 Pathfinder local authority, after visits to that area, and that this had been useful for understanding the importance of monitoring the quality of provision and the potential for 'centres of excellence' for Diploma delivery. Other consortium leads had picked up useful information through informal networking, and some thought that they could have benefitted from direct contact with a more experienced partner. For example, one commented that *'it would have been lovely to have had a mentor'*.

Institutional managers in most Gateway 2 consortia also said that there had been very little dissemination from Gateway 1 consortia, except for visits which they had arranged themselves, which had often been very useful. A line of learning lead emphasised the value of this type of direct contact, with this advice to other line of learning leads:

*Talk to someone in your job, who has done the job, to get a sense of what you need to put in place to get the Diploma to work. You can have as much training as is offered to you, but when you are on the ground and communicating with people you've never met before, it would be useful to speak to someone who has done all that before.*

Reflecting on experience of their own Gateway 1 delivery, two practical pieces of advice that came from consortium leads were:

- Be aware of how easy it is to underestimate the time it takes for teaching staff to plan for delivery, so encourage institutions to provide off-timetable protected time for this
- Consider limiting implementation to a maximum of four lines of learning in one year, to avoid the risk of compromising quality.

All the consortia intended to continue their involvement in Diploma delivery and intended to introduce from two to seven new lines of learning.

Overall it is therefore worth considering that Gateway 1 experiences could be better exploited by, for example, the provision of one-to-one mentoring.



## 2.2 Consortium effectiveness and cohesion

The Gateway 1 baseline case studies had revealed a difference in the perceptions of interviewees on effectiveness and cohesion within consortia. Although the two were clearly linked, effectiveness was generally seen as related to structure and management, while cohesion was about the spirit of collaboration, successful partnership working and 'shared vision'.

### 2.2.1 Consortium effectiveness

Views from the Gateway 2 case studies on what facilitated an effective consortium were the same as those put forward the previous year. A coherent management structure with good communication between the various layers, and strong but flexible leadership at the top, were seen as most important. There were also similar comments about the need to gain the support of senior managers in schools and colleges and the importance of relevant training and adequate support systems for those implementing and delivering Diplomas.

Whereas a good management structure and communication system could be based on existing examples of good practice, and improved if there were weaknesses, the cultural and mindset changes required to achieve a willingness to collaborate and develop a 'shared vision' were much more elusive. On the whole, interviewees from the Gateway 1 case-study sample had accepted that cohesion was more difficult to achieve, but they were optimistic that given time, this would happen, and they were willing to do their best to promote it. The picture emerging from the Gateway 2 case-study consortia was less positive. Only in four consortia was there a prevailing view that collaboration and commitment to shared delivery was developing as well as it should be, although most consortia had adopted an element of collaboration in their delivery models (see Chapter 3).

### 2.2.2 Consortium cohesion

Two of the four consortia with more positive views on collaboration had begun Diploma delivery in 2008, and in both of them, the level of cohesion was considered to have improved since the previous year, although commitment to collaboration still varied amongst institutions. A senior manager in one of these consortia described the rate of progress:

*It was patchy at the beginning – there were some leading the programme and others that were reluctant to move forward because they couldn't see how their structures would cope with it. Now they have seen how others have coped, they are more ready to commit.*

The other two were preparing for delivery in 2009, and so were at an earlier stage of development, but in both there was optimism that sound foundations had been laid for working collaboratively. Nevertheless, the consortium lead in one pointed out that there was a generally accepted view among schools that they needed to broaden their pre-16 offer, but gaining the commitment of all still required more work.

Amongst the other eleven consortia, the level of cohesion varied from what was described by a line of learning lead as '*minimal at best*', to situations where there was commitment from some institutions, but it varied considerably. The observation of

one senior manager illustrates the context in which consortia were aiming to become established:

*If I'm totally honest in terms of 14-19 collaboration here, there are a lot of sceptics and I'm one of them. Only two or three schools are engaging with it and there's a lot of politics about why you engage and when you engage. For some it's a threat and for some it's an opportunity and for some it's one or the other at different times of the year.*

Similar comments about levels of engagement and unwillingness to develop the shared vision that would help to confront these challenges were repeated in other consortia. For example, a senior manager summed up the challenge of trying to achieve the necessary change in mindset to overcome the natural tendency of institutions to prioritise their own interests:

*This is an issue for the consortium because a lot of schools have not engaged with the Diploma at all. They should think about the benefits for their learners, but they don't, they still put themselves first.*

The willingness to work for the 'greater good' was something that interviewees in Gateway 1 consortia<sup>3</sup> had pointed out as key to achieving effective collaboration and, as they had also emphasised, this was not something that could be imposed or hurried, but would develop in the fullness of time.

Overall the effectiveness and cohesion of consortia management was progressing, albeit slowly, as most consortia had adopted an element of collaboration in their delivery models. A positive attitude to change, and the benefits accrued from it, would benefit the speed of change.

### 2.2.3 Particular barriers to collaboration

As the majority of the Gateway 2 consortia were still preparing for delivery when the visits took place, there is every possibility that these consortia will become more cohesive in time. However, there were **issues in the wider educational landscape**, for example the difficulties facing National Challenge schools and the development of the academy programme, that affect the underpinning collaborative process on which Diploma delivery depends. Discussion regarding these external barriers might be worth considering as this wider context might currently be viewed as impinging on further collaboration.

Echoing the comments made in many Gateway 1 consortia during the 2008 case-study visits<sup>4</sup>, interviewees said that it was shared delivery between schools that could create challenges, because of the level of trust that was required. High performing schools were described as being 'nervous' about sending their students to other schools, particularly when there was also parental influence to consider - as a senior manager explained:

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<sup>3</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

*There's a problem with schools which are perceived as being poor schools. Some parents wouldn't allow their children to go because of such perceptions.*

Although relationships between schools and FE colleges were generally perceived to be less challenging, this was often only for pre-16 courses, whereas competition for post-16 students made it difficult to develop trust; for example one interviewee explained the difficulties of trying to change attitudes to '*work cooperatively in a context which is competitive*'. The sensitivities over different funding systems for pre and post-16 students and salary structures between schools and FE colleges, which were also considered to hinder school-college collaboration, should begin to be addressed by the transfer of post-16 commissioning of courses to LAs in April 2010.

Funding issues were raised in three consortia as an inhibitor of cohesion. One consortium lead described this as a major challenge, with schools having initially agreed to a scheme which involved them giving up some of their specialism money, but they were now backing out. A senior manager in another consortium was very critical of other institutions that she considered to have taken advantage of the funding system, whereas her school had been disadvantaged. She described the situation in this way:

*They have taken the money and run and meanwhile we have had everybody's kids here and we are now running on a deficit budget.*

These comments perhaps reveal a lack of full understanding of Diploma funding mechanisms and might indicate a need for clarification.

Overall, therefore, the picture emerging from the Gateway 2 case studies on levels of collaboration and consortium cohesion was less positive than in Gateway 1. One explanation could be that the consortia approved through Gateway 1 were those that were particularly committed to the collaborative principle underlying Diplomas and were more prepared to accept that the challenges would be considerable and might require difficult decisions. There were indications from the Gateway 2 case studies that some institutions had become involved in Diploma consortia because it was expected of them, and they were less positive about facing the challenges of collaboration. In several consortia, there were references to institutions that had been initially involved and then had withdrawn, and to those that claimed they were committed, but their commitment had yet to become a reality– it was summed up by one consortium lead as '*the difference between espousement and enactment*'.

A history of previous partnership working could also provide a sound basis for building a cohesive consortium, and in the two consortia already referred to as having an optimistic view of collaboration, although they were 'new', the consortium leads emphasised that there was a strong history of partnership working. However, there were other consortia which interviewees considered lacking in cohesion, although they also had a previous experience of partnerships. As already pointed out, successful partnerships in delivering key stage 4 learning, for example through the Increased Flexibility Programme, was not the same as shared delivery between schools, and the courses involved were generally less complex and took up less time than the Diploma. Much would also have depended on how successful these pre-existing partnerships were perceived to have been and the extent to which they had brought staff from different institutions together.

There were also examples of particular lines of learning, for instance, Information Technology, and Business, Administration and Finance, that could be delivered by institutions on their own (see Chapter 3), and there was therefore no perceived need to enter into collaborative arrangements. Although collaborative delivery may be seen as an important principle underlying Diplomas, there may also need to be recognition of the pragmatic decision taken by some institutions that they could deliver a Diploma very effectively 'in-house'.

#### 2.2.4 Looking to the future

Despite the challenges that many consortia had faced in trying to develop cohesion, consortium and line of learning leads tended to retain some optimism about the future, believing that attitudes would eventually change and that it was unrealistic to expect a collaborative spirit to emerge in the short term. For example, a consortium lead commented:

*I'm not surprised that institutions have fallen out in discussions about delivery, because they don't speak the same language and they don't have the same expectations.*

There was understanding of the nature of the barriers that some schools faced in wholeheartedly committing to a new qualification that potentially could have considerable impact on their institutions and staff. This included the effect of what could be described as the circumspect view reportedly among many teachers, and particularly senior management, that there had been many new initiatives in the past that had a short duration, described in this way by a senior leader: *'They were supposed to be the new panacea for education, introduced with lots of commotion and then they fade away'*. This encouraged a 'wait-and-see attitude' which made early commitment less likely.

Additionally there was an acknowledgement by interviewees that changing attitudes was a long-term process, explained for example, by this senior manager: *'We are looking at a whole new way of working, from autonomy of institution to collaboration of institutions'*

Challenges to achieving cohesion in consortia were greater where the issue that required resolving was structural (which exacerbated the underlying reluctance to collaborate), such as perceived poor communication between managers. In the majority of consortia, where challenges were more associated with changes in attitude, there was a belief that patient building on the good relationships that did exist, was the best way forward. Dissemination of good examples of collaborative practice which showed how challenges could be overcome would be a practical way of encouraging and supporting greater cohesion.

### 2.3 Summary

It appears therefore that the Gateway 2 case-study consortia had established similar management structures to those used by Gateway 1 consortia and that in most cases these worked effectively and were facilitated by firm leadership, good communication, established relationships and a commitment to the principle of collaborative working.

The exceptions were where leadership was perceived to be weak, or decision-making was hampered by poor communication between layers of management. Although the challenges of collaboration were presenting greater problems for these Gateway 2 consortia than they seem to have done for the Gateway 1 case studies, they were at an early stage of their journey towards cohesive partnership working, and future phases of the evaluation will show whether the obstacles are overcome. Within their own institutions, staff felt prepared to begin teaching the Diploma, and there were some good examples of partnerships, as the following chapter on Diploma delivery indicates.

### 3. Diploma delivery

#### Key findings

- Overall, at the time of the interviews in the summer term 2009, institutions felt that they would be ready to deliver lines of learning approved through Gateway 2 from September. Individual consortia were most likely to report that preparation was still required in relation to: the development of shared protocols across partners; assessment; employer engagement; and logistics (such as transport arrangements). Some of these issues relate to the practicalities of collaboration.
- Level 1 delivery was unlikely to commence in September 2009 in at least five consortia. Numbers opting for Level 1 in other areas were small, and some were planning to co-teach with Level 2 learners to generate a class size of sufficient numbers, although guided learning hours are different.
- There were no plans for a post-16 offer, at any level, in 2009-2010 in five areas; this was most often due to institutions being content with existing qualifications or due to a reported lack of current demand from learners. However, some acknowledged that they would need to offer Level 3 Diplomas in the future for learner progression from Level 2 pre-16.
- It was most common for the delivery models to involve some degree of 'collaboration' between institutions, although there was evidence to suggest that there was scope for more cohesion across partnerships.
- In a minority of institutions, the Diploma had replaced other qualifications on the timetable; in others, the view was that as the number of Diploma lines increased, they would need to look at whether all other courses were viable.
- Some interviewees perceived there was a need for a consortium-wide approach to functional skills delivery, particularly where Diplomas were being delivered in partnership. A discrete approach to teaching functional skills was favoured by home schools in order to 'train' learners for examinations, but this raises questions about whether learners will be given the opportunity to apply the skills in a broader context and whether the experience of principal learning varies according to the different delivery methods of functional skills.
- There was evidence of a broader range of additional and specialist learning options than had been the case across the Gateway 1 sample, and there was recognition that consortium-wide approaches to offering this would be beneficial if universally adopted by institutions.

## Recommendations

- As more Diploma lines become available, schools will need to work together to deliver the range of Diplomas. There may be a need for ways to encourage schools to collaborate further.
- There may be a need to explore adjusting the Level 1 Diploma by, for example, aligning it more with Level 2 so that guided learning hours are similar and the equivalent of a maximum of grade C at GCSE could be achieved, thereby eliminating concerns over progression. Decisions over when to enter a student for Level 1 or 2 could then be made at an advanced stage of the course.
- Institutions may need more support in relation to the delivery of functional skills, particularly to assist specialist teachers in making links with broader contexts (including principal learning), in order for learners to recognise and apply the skills.
- There may be scope for proactive support and information being provided to teaching staff in relation to assessment.
- Learners need to be made more aware of the additional and specialist learning component of the Diploma and its aim of adding breadth or depth. Examples of how a broad offer is achieved by some consortia/institutions are likely to be beneficial for those facing challenges.
- Consortia would welcome clarification on future funding for Diploma delivery in order to address future capacity and sustainability.

### 3.1 The Diploma 'offer'

Table 3.1 illustrates how many of the Gateway 2 case-study consortia were intending to start delivering each of the lines of learning from September 2009. Amongst the 'new' **Phase 2** lines of learning, Hair and Beauty Studies was most often offered, followed by Business, Administration and Finance. Manufacturing and Product Design was least prevalent. Plans for which levels to deliver were still tentative in some cases. As had been the case with the Gateway 1 consortia,<sup>5</sup> Level 1 delivery was particularly uncertain (with no Level 1 Diplomas likely to commence in at least five consortia). There was no post-16 offer in at least five of the 15 consortia. Where reasons were given, this was either because FE colleges were content with their existing qualifications on offer (also a factor influencing take-up of Diplomas amongst learners), because they wanted to focus attention on pre-16 Diplomas in their first year of delivery, or because of a perceived lack of demand for Diplomas amongst learners. One line of learning lead, for example said:

We did not feel there would be the demand for it yet...we put the idea out there and there wasn't any response. It made sense to focus on one level of the Diploma [Level 2] and deliver what would be closer to an excellent qualification.

<sup>5</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

Staff in one college believed that they would need to offer Level 3 Diplomas in the future for learner progression from Level 2 pre-16. There was a discrepancy between some consortium leads and line of learning leads about which Diplomas levels would commence, suggesting that plans were still tentative.

**Table 3.1 Lines of learning planned to commence in September 2009**

Line of learning	Estimated number of the 15 Gateway 2 case-study consortia <i>starting to deliver the line of learning from September 2009</i> <sup>6</sup>
<b>Phase 1</b>	
Engineering	6
Society, Health & Development	4
Information Technology	7
Creative & Media	11
Construction & the Built Environment	5
<b>Phase 2</b>	
Business, Administration and Finance	7
Hair and Beauty Studies	13
Hospitality	5
Environmental and Land-based	5
Manufacturing and Product Design	1
<b>Total case-study consortia</b>	<b>15</b>

Note: Consortia could be offering more than one line of learning

### 3.2 Preparedness for delivery

At the time of the interviews, in the spring prior to September 2009 delivery, the case-study institutions generally felt confident that they were reasonably prepared and would be ready to deliver the lines of learning approved through Gateway 2. Overall, progress had been assisted by the following prevailing factors:

- **having the ‘right’ staff** on board, in terms of skills, expertise, commitment and enthusiasm. One consortium lead said, for example, *‘the team are good...they’re experienced and flexible’*. Similarly, one senior manager said teachers were *‘fired up by the vision behind the Diploma and wanting to make that work’*.
- **line of learning leads** who had a key development role and who had often had dedicated time to attend training and for planning (which was considered crucial). In fact, at the time of the interviews, line of learning leads reported being more prepared than practitioners who would teach the Diploma, who had less non-contact time for planning and training<sup>7</sup>. One lead said, *‘with hindsight, my*

<sup>6</sup> Six of the consortia were previously involved in Gateway 1 and would have started some of the first five lines of learning in 2008. This sample was chosen primarily on the basis of delivery of Gateway 2 lines of learning, based on information provided by consortium leads in a telephone survey in February 2009. It should be noted that during visits which took place slightly later, it was reported that the delivery of some lines of learning might not commence in September 2009, either due to low take-up or because more planning time was wanted.

Actual delivery will be investigated during follow-up visits.

<sup>7</sup> Note that Gateway 1 consortia had emphasised the importance of ensuring that delivery staff had dedicated non-teaching time to plan for delivery. See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online]



*practitioners haven't been as involved as much as I'd like'. Information was cascaded by line of learning leads, and practitioner planning would take place over the summer months as the following comments illustrate:*

*We'll get the schemes of work finished and then we'll involve them [the practitioners]*

*I feel operationally we're in place...all we need to do now is up the ante a bit as far as getting down to the people who are dealing directly with students. We've got some activities coming up...in the summer*

- having the necessary **facilities**, either in individual institutions or across partners
- **learning from experience**, if consortia were previously involved in Gateway 1
- **experience of similar qualifications** (including BTECs): for example, as one consortium lead said, *'teachers involved have built up expertise in delivering vocational-type courses over several years'*
- **close collaborations** (facilitated by trust, communication and practical arrangements such as aligned timetables), although as discussed in Chapter 2, there was scope for more cohesion across a number of partnerships.

Similar factors, including effective partnership working, having practical arrangements in place (such as aligned timetables), having clear management structures, and staff having time to plan, were all mentioned by Gateway 1 consortia when preparing for 2008 delivery.<sup>8</sup>

There did not seem to be any particular issues in relation to preparation for specific lines of learning. Rather, consortia were most likely to report that preparation was still required in relation to the following generic factors:

- the development of **shared protocols**, such as quality assurance and standardised practices
- the existence of **electronic systems/virtual learning** environments (VLEs). For example, VLEs were said to assist with *'marking, planning, attendance, behaviour management, recording and reporting'*. The lack of progress in establishing systems was a concern in consortia where there was shared delivery. In only two consortia was the development of a VLE said to be progressing, yet it was restricted to use within individual schools rather than extended to the partner FE colleges. Of those able to comment, three other consortia reported that there was no VLE and no specific plan to introduce this. There was evidence of a VLE being planned in a minority of other areas. Overall, the evidence suggests that, at this stage, the use of VLEs is not central to the delivery models adopted in most case-study consortia
- **assessment**, particularly functional skills assessment (for example, more sample papers from awarding bodies would be considered useful)

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Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

<sup>8</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online]

Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

- **employer engagement** (see Section 3.3.2 below)
- **logistics**, including transport arrangements.

Similarly, Gateway 1 consortia visited in 2008 reported that all of these factors had hindered their preparedness prior to 2008 delivery<sup>9</sup>, suggesting they are on-going issues for consideration.

Interestingly, interviewees in the Gateway 2 sample did not refer explicitly to issues concerning collaborative working, although issues to do with shared protocols, use of VLEs, and logistical issues are facets of partnership working which need to be developed further.

There were specific issues in three individual consortia: in one, the line of learning lead for Society, Health and Development was reported to have put too much focus on the development of Level 3 post-16, to the detriment of Level 2 pre-16. In the other two, there was uncertainty about whether particular lines of learning were going to go ahead as planned, due to uncertainties (for example, about funding) in the schools supposed to be delivering them, leaving the consortium leads to devise a plan for students who had opted to take the Diploma lines. This again suggests a lack of cohesion across some partnerships. There did not appear to be any issues specific to individual lines of learning. Other challenges faced in preparing for delivery are discussed below in Section 3.3.

It should be noted that in two consortia, delivery had commenced in the summer term 2009, when learners were in Year 9, which meant they had needed to be prepared earlier than other consortia.

### 3.3 Models of delivery

#### 3.3.1 Structural models of delivery

A number of models of delivery emerged during visits to Gateway 1 case-study consortia (see Table 3.2)<sup>10</sup>; the existence and prevalence of these models was then explored with the Gateway 2 sample, in terms of whether they were *planning* to adopt any of these models for 2009 delivery.

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<sup>9</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

**Table 3.2 Models of delivery**

<b>Models</b>	<b>Number of Gateway 2 consortia planning to deliver lines of learning</b>
<b>Model A</b> Learners travel between their own school and a FE college or training provider for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	10
<b>Model B</b> Learners study <i>all</i> * of their Diploma in a FE college or training provider outside their 'home' institution; (applies to pre-16 learners or to learners travelling outside their sixth form)	6
<b>Model C</b> All Diploma learning takes place within the learners' own school (pre-16, or school sixth form post-16)	7
<b>Model D</b> All Diploma learning takes place in a partner 'host' school (either pre-16, or a host school sixth form post-16)	4
<b>Model E</b> Learners travel between their own school and another/other school(s) for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations (either pre- or post-16 if in the sixth form)	4
<b>Model F</b> All Diploma learning takes place within the learners' own FE college (post-16 only)	10**

*\*Note that for Model B, interviewees were asked if all learning took place elsewhere. However, analysis revealed that they are likely to have interpreted this to mean all principal learning, as functional skills and additional and specialist learning was most often the responsibility of the home school.*

*\*\*There was no post-16 offer in five of the 15 case-study consortia.*

Consistent with the findings from Gateway 1, it was most common for the delivery models to involve *some* degree of 'collaboration' (most often in relation to the delivery of principal learning). This most often involved 'shared delivery' between a school and FE college (although this did not necessarily mean joint teaching, but each institution delivering different units). This model was most prevalent for a number of lines of learning: Creative and Media, Hair and Beauty Studies, Construction and the Built Environment, Engineering, Society, Health and Development, and Environmental and Land-based Studies.

A degree of 'collaboration' would also be required for Models B, D, and E, where learners would either be travelling outside their home institution for all of their Diploma learning or where different schools were each delivering different units (requiring for example, liaison between the home and host institutions about the course, travel, discipline, and learner progress).

In at least four consortia, there were plans for staff to travel outside of their own institution to teach the Diploma. For example, in one area, a college tutor would teach elements of Construction and the Built Environment in a local school which had good facilities and some units would be taught at college. In another area, one school

would be hosting the Creative and Media Diploma; learners would travel from a local school, along with their own teacher who would be co-teaching in the host school.

As was the case with Gateway 1 consortia,<sup>11</sup> the rationale for collaboration seemed to be based on utilising expertise and facilities across the consortia. This approach is likely to become more sustained in recognition that the ability to offer learners the range of Diploma lines depends considerably on partnership working, as no one school is likely to have the capacity to deliver all lines without support. As the number of Diploma lines available increases, delivery will become more complex for individual institutions, and is likely to increase the need for collaboration. The extent of 'buy-in' to this approach is likely to have an impact on the success of Diplomas and the learning experience, which will be explored once delivery commences. Consortia facing challenges are likely to benefit from 'good practice' examples of collaborative working and messages about the added value to the learning experience. This may be particularly the case where different schools are working in partnership, as there is less history of this model compared with schools and FE colleges working together.

Moreover, where collaboration existed within a consortium, this did not mean that partnerships were cohesive (see Chapter 2) or that all institutions intended to deliver Diplomas with partners, as some institutions planned to deliver entirely in-house. This was most often because they felt *able* to deliver without support (this model was particularly prevalent for Business, Administration and Finance and Information Technology), although it was also seen as the easiest option by some in the first year of delivery. For example, one interviewee said it would '*avoid the issues which might arise if they [learners] go to other centres*'. Competition between institutions was not mentioned as a reason for not collaborating amongst those currently delivering Diplomas, although it was raised as an issue for schools not yet involved in Diploma delivery (see Section 3.4 below). It seems, therefore, that if schools feel they need to collaborate to deliver a Diploma line they do so; the question is how well the collaboration is working in practice (see Chapter 2 for a discussion on partnership cohesion).

In two consortia, the Business, Administration and Finance Diploma was the only line of learning approved through Gateway 2, and the intention was that it would be delivered entirely in-house at home institutions (Model C). Schools felt able and experienced to deliver this line without support and so there was no planned collaboration of any kind. This was a similar approach to that adopted by some Gateway 1 consortia for the Information Technology Diploma, for the same reasons<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.3.2 Involvement of employers, training providers and higher education institutions

Overall, **employers** were said to be engaged in preparation for Diploma delivery in seven of the 15 consortia. The consortia that were previously involved in Gateway 1 delivery seemed more established than those only involved in Gateway 2. In four other areas, progress was said to vary across lines of learning. The line of learning mentioned most often by interviewees was Creative and Media, but progress seemed

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<sup>11</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

to depend on local circumstances. For example access to large companies, such as theatres and museums, varied. As one consortium lead, for example, said:

*there is only one small theatre in the area, so performing arts is a challenge.*

In the remaining four consortia, plans for engaging employers with 2009 delivery were still underway. In half of the sample of 15 consortia, there was specific mention of assistance from Education Business Partnership Organisations (EBPOs), Chambers of Commerce, the Careers Service, or individuals who had dedicated responsibility for employer engagement. In a number of cases, events such as breakfast meetings were planned to inform employers about Diplomas (so far, the response had been positive). The consortium leads in two areas raised the issue of the economic climate, but this did not seem to be an issue in general. The importance of helping employers to understand what they could gain from involvement was emphasised. For example, in one area employers with a community outreach programme were targeted, as they were considered likely to benefit from involvement. In others, reference was made to what the Diploma consortia could offer as an incentive, such as IT courses for employers' staff, or free business cards produced by Creative and Media students. Overall, the evidence from these 15 consortia indicates that engagement of employers to support delivery of Diplomas was well underway in preparation for September 2009.

In only two consortia were there plans for **training providers** to be involved in the delivery of lines of learning commencing in 2009 (Hair and Beauty Studies in both areas, as well as Business, Administration and Finance in one). In three consortia, the intention was that training providers would be involved in future lines of learning. Currently, however, representation of training providers in consortia was most likely to be only at consortium level. The cost of training providers' involvement in Diploma delivery was considered a barrier in two consortia as they were perceived to be expensive by interviewees. These findings suggest that training provider involvement is an area requiring further exploration.

In four consortia, **HEIs** were represented on the Diploma strategy groups and attended meetings to discuss Diploma development. In seven areas (not mutually exclusive from the first four), there were reports of specific discussions with HEIs about Diploma progression routes. Moreover, there were plans in four areas for HEIs to be involved more directly with Diploma delivery, either by offering use of their facilities, their students acting as mentors for Diploma learners, or by teaching occasional 'master classes'. There was more engagement of HEIs in these Gateway 2 consortia than was the case in Gateway 1 which suggests that involvement of HEIs to support delivery of Diplomas will become more prevalent.

### 3.3.3 Co-teaching

In five of the 15 consortia, there were plans for some institutions to co-teach Levels 1 and 2, most often because of low numbers of learners opting to do Level 1 (thus co-teaching to generate a class size of sufficient numbers of Diploma learners). However, as one consortium lead commented, Level 1 learners may need support for this to work:

*[The success of this model] will depend on how well we can support the Level 1 learners.*

Others felt this approach would be positive in helping to promote independent learning skills.

### 3.3.4 Functional skills delivery

Across the case-study consortia, the plan was for the delivery of functional skills to be the responsibility of the home institution, which was consistent with the findings from the Gateway 1 sample consortia<sup>13</sup>. A range of delivery approaches were planned across the consortia, most often decided upon at an institution level rather than consortium level. Some perceived there was a need for more cohesive thinking within a consortium, particularly where Diplomas were being delivered in partnership (for example, institutions were not always using the same Awarding Body). Institutions were often planning to adopt a number of approaches, referring to discrete lessons as well as suggesting that functional skills would be taught less explicitly via principal learning or GCSEs, for example.

Before the announcement that functional skills would not become a compulsory element of English and mathematics GCSEs for *all* learners, a popular plan was for the skills to be taught within GCSEs, meaning Diploma learners would be taught alongside other learners. With this change in policy, some staff perceived that there was no longer a need for all learners to be taught functional skills, causing them to revise their delivery models. For example, one senior manager explained:

*As functional skills are now only absolutely vital to Diploma students, it's a different set-up.*

Instead, discrete teaching was favoured by most institutions. Even where institutions were still planning to embed functional skills in GCSEs, they were often planning some discrete teaching prior to the examinations. The rationale for this approach was not only to allow schools to focus functional skills teaching solely on Diploma learners, but it was also a reaction to the assessment approach. Many staff emphasised the importance of preparing Diploma learners for the functional skills examinations. For example, as two senior managers commented:

*I would prefer it if functional skills were weaved into the Diploma and continuously assessed, rather than being exams that are viewed by schools as hurdles.*

*We don't want students...failing the Diploma because they can't get a Level 2 in functional skills.*

This discrete approach raises a question about whether learners will be able to apply the skills in a broader context.

There were reports in some institutions across nine of the 15 consortia of plans to embed functional skills where possible within the principal learning units to help learners make links, although it was rare for this to be the *only* approach. Rather, it

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<sup>13</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>



was often an additional opportunity for learners to demonstrate the functional skills they had developed in discrete lessons.

Some had planned this more carefully than others, most often those previously involved in Gateway 1, who had had more time to establish their approach. There were examples of functional skills having been mapped to the principal learning curriculum, for example. In one area, there were plans for specialist English, mathematics and ICT teachers to 'team teach' with those teaching the principal learning elements of the Business, Administration and Finance Diploma. This is an interesting approach which will be explored in future phases of the research, as the findings from Gateway 1 case studies to date have identified enhanced communication between staff teaching functional skills and those delivering the principal learning, would be beneficial as those teaching functional skills often do not have sector-specific knowledge<sup>14</sup>.

Overall, staff views about functional skills ranged from those who firmly believed in the philosophy of functional skills and were thinking carefully about the best teaching approach, to those who were more influenced by the assessment approach and were inclined to teach discretely and enter learners into examinations as early as possible. For example, one teacher had done this to '*get it done and out of the way*'. At this stage there was no consensus among staff, and the impact of these varying attitudes on the learner experience will be explored at a later stage.

### 3.3.5 Additional and specialist learning

There was evidence in nine of the 15 case-study consortia of a relatively broad offer of additional and specialist learning opportunities. In two of those consortia, pre-16 learners in some schools had the opportunity to study for additional or specialist qualifications outside their home institution in order to increase their choice. An aligned slot on the timetable had been given to additional and specialist learning across partners, to allow for such opportunities. As one senior manager said, for example:

This is what the Diploma is about...personalised learning; you design the programme you want it to be.

In the other seven consortia, this component was the responsibility of the home institution, yet references were made to specialist learning opportunities and the importance of offering a range of options. For example, BTEC First Diploma courses in similar subject areas to the Diploma lines were mentioned (such as Media for Creative and Media students), alongside other 'applied' courses and specialist short courses. This was the case pre- and post-16 (although overall it was more likely for a specialist learning offer to be broader post-16). References were made to specialist learning qualifications being chosen to add a more practical element to the Diploma experience. In one consortium, there was mention of discussions with a local HEI about the types of qualifications they would recommend as beneficial for post-16 learners wanting to progress on to higher education courses.

Overall, the additional and specialist learning offer seemed broader amongst the Gateway 2 case-study sample than had been the case with the Gateway 1 sample. This could be because more time has passed for consortia to consider the options

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<sup>14</sup> See Lynch, S., McCrone, T., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Evans, K., Golden, S. and Haynes, G (forthcoming 2010). *National evaluation of Diplomas: Experiences of Diploma delivery across Gateway 1 consortia*. London: DCSF

available (this had not been an initial priority for consortia involved in the first phase) or that the Gateway 2 lines of learning lend themselves to a broader range of opportunities for specialist learning.

In the remaining six consortia where the offer was more limited to the 'standard curriculum offer', this was for a number of reasons, including:

- schools wanting learners to take a qualification related to the institution's specialism, such as a language or technology subject
- a perception that it is an expensive model for partners to deliver this component (for example, as one senior manager said, 'additional and specialist learning could be delivered by the college, but it costs £600 per student and as the host institution only gets £1000 per student it would be a fairly large chunk') and that if partners did so, learners would be away from their home institution for too long
- timetable constraints, particularly if there were small numbers of Diploma learners (as one interviewee said, for example, 'If you take 13 students and try to match them each to their interest, you'd end up with far too many small numbers for it to be viable'). In a minority of cases, additional or specialist learning was proscribed due to small numbers. With such constraints, it was considered easier to offer existing options. A broader offer may be possible as numbers of Diploma learners increase.

### 3.3.6 Assessment

Amongst those managing the implementation of the lines of learning approved through Gateway 2, there were mixed reports about progress in relation to assessment at the time of the 'baseline' visits. Progress in terms of preparation for assessment varied even within consortia for different lines of learning. Some line of learning leads across eight consortia felt confident about assessment, often as they thought staff had experience of similar assessment approaches, such as the assessment of BTEC courses. One lead said, '*It's the same as any BTEC First*'. Where they were confident, leads often approved of the mixed assessment approaches, including internal and external assessments. However, in six consortia (not mutually exclusive from the others already mentioned), some leads felt that awarding bodies were not distributing information early enough (at the time of the interviews in the summer term 2009, one line of learning lead had only received specifications for three assignments). Some staff felt under-prepared in terms of assessment at the time of the interviews (as reflected above in Section 3.2). In three consortia, leads commented on the scale of assessment as burdensome. For example, one Business, Administration and Finance lead said:

*The management of assessment will be huge...I'm not sure how we'll manage seven pieces of coursework, the extended project, as well as two external exams.*

The importance of quality assurance and standardisation across partnerships needs further discussion by strategic staff at consortium-level. In summary, it appears that assessment continued to be one of the features of Diplomas in which teaching staff in some consortia felt least confident and there may be scope for proactive support and information being provided to teaching staff and shared within consortia.



### 3.3.7 Impact of Diploma delivery on the timetable and curriculum

All 15 Gateway 2 case-study consortia had achieved some form of **aligned timetable** to facilitate collaborative delivery, including shared delivery of Diplomas where relevant. However, in three of these areas, this was only *partially* the case, as some schools had not accepted this change (suggesting scope for more collaboration and cohesion). In another, local Academies were reported to have different school calendars and to set their own timetables which were not in line with other schools (which was a barrier to collaboration), which may be the case in other areas. Where aligned timetables were in place, there was a feeling amongst consortium leads that the effective delivery of Diplomas was dependent on institutions changing their timetables to accommodate the needs of learners. As one lead said, for instance, *'in terms of duty of care it appears to be the best model'*. There were comments that full days were more effective than half days (to avoid additional travelling time). A notable minority of staff across four consortia observed that the timetable had to be changed for the benefit of a small number of learners, which they felt had a detrimental impact on all learners, as the core curriculum was condensed into other 'non-Diploma' days. Comments included:

A small number of [Diploma] kids are holding the timetable to ransom.

*It's great for Diplomas, but it's meant we've had to condense the core into three days...and that's not good practice. It's to the detriment of the core.*

However, the fact that aligned timetables were in place to some extent in all consortia meant that most were prepared to embrace this change, although there were still some who were unwilling to do so (particularly when it was anticipated that only small numbers of learners would opt to take Diplomas), which might have implications for the model of delivery.

To date, most institutions had not changed the range of **other qualifications available** on the timetable as a result of plans to deliver the Diplomas. However, it was acknowledged that if a learner chose to study for a Diploma, the *range* of other choices they could make was limited (due to the guided learning hours). In only three of the 15 case-study areas were institutions planning to withdraw particular Applied GCSEs in favour of Diplomas in the 2009-2010 academic year. In one, for example, Society, Health and Development had replaced the Health and Social Care BTEC National Diploma at an FE college. In a different area, the Construction and the Built Environment Diploma was competing with the Young Apprenticeship programme (construction Level 2); the lead was concerned that take-up for the Diploma would be low, making it unviable. Others reported that, as the number of Diploma lines they delivered increased, they would need to look at which other courses were viable. In two areas, there were reports that demand for other courses had declined due to learners choosing Diplomas; again, schools were looking at whether it would be feasible to run the other courses in the future.

## 3.4 Challenges in preparing for delivery

Whilst consortia generally felt that those who were delivering Diplomas would be prepared by September 2009, the in-depth interviews with consortium leads and line of learning leads in the 15 case-study consortia indicated that there were some challenges faced in planning for delivery. These challenges related either to preparation for 2009 delivery or to future Diploma delivery. It should be noted that

each challenge was raised in a small number of consortia (indicated below) in response to an open-ended question, but gives an indication of some of the issues faced, which may be faced by others in the future.

### Challenges preparing for 2009 delivery

- **Transport** (raised in five consortia, including two rural areas): The time taken to transport learners (particularly in rural areas) was an issue, as were the costs of transport. The consortium lead in one rural area said, for instance, *'in order to provide the entitlement it takes a lot of travel time in the day'*. However, consortia were working hard to come up with solutions to these challenges, such as planning bus routes.
- **Collaboration** (three consortia): When asked about preparations for delivery, staff in three consortia made specific references to challenges with collaboration, including a lack of communication and the development of agreed protocols across different types of institution (such as schools and colleges). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, it seemed that there was also scope for more cohesion across partners in other consortia.
- **Take-up** (two consortia): Two line of learning leads referred to the impact on finances of lower than expected take-up. For example, *'we need a certain number of students to make it cost neutral'*. Some institutions reported that they would be operating in deficit initially, but hoped take-up would increase.
- **Staff numbers** (two consortia): Due to small numbers of Diploma learners at present, only small numbers of teaching staff were involved. There were concerns about what would happen if staff were sick or left. This is summed up in the comment of one teacher who said *'because it's small-scale and it relies heavily on individual staff, if someone got sick, cover arrangements would be a nightmare'*.

### Challenges associated with future delivery

- **Capacity and sustainability** (four consortia): In one area, the capacity to deliver all 14 lines of learning in the future was raised. The lead said, *'we're going to have to link with other partnerships in the future. [The consortium] can't deliver 14 Diplomas'*. However, they were worried about the distances learners would need to travel if the partnership expanded to include other consortia, and the logistical challenges which this would cause. Staff in two areas referred to uncertainty about the future of Diplomas nationally. Others questioned the sustainability of a complex, expanding travel-to-learn model, or raised uncertainties about future funding.
- **Future resources/funding** (three consortia): As well as uncertainties about future funding, some staff referred to Diploma implementation as expensive in terms of facilities, travel, time required for planning and quality control.
- **Commitment of local schools** (three consortia): As more Diploma lines become available, schools are likely to need to collaborate with partners to be able to offer learners access to a range of Diplomas. Encouraging partners to collaborate for the benefit of learners is going to be a continuing challenge for the implementation of Diplomas.

### 3.5 Summary

Overall, Gateway 2 consortia felt that they would be ready to deliver lines of learning approved to commence in September 2009. This was largely due to: having staff on board with the necessary skills, expertise and enthusiasm; the hard work of line of learning leads who often had dedicated time to attend training and for planning; and the development of close collaboration, facilitated by trust, communication and practical arrangements such as aligned timetables (although not all consortia had developed such relationships or strategies). However, preparing for delivery of the Diploma qualification presented some particular challenges which consortia staff would need to address before full implementation. These concerned establishing shared protocols, understanding and planning for the assessment of the Diploma, engaging employers and addressing the logistical arrangements, such as transport.

Level 1 Diplomas were not universally offered and numbers opting for Level 1 where it was to be delivered were small, resulting in some planned co-teaching with Level 2 learners to make Level 1 a viable option. There were no plans for a post-16 offer, at any level, in 2009-2010 in five areas, although there was acknowledgement amongst post-16 institutions that they would need to offer Level 3 Diplomas in the future to facilitate learner progression from Level 2 pre-16.

It was most common for the delivery models to involve *some* degree of 'collaboration' between institutions, although there was evidence to suggest that there was scope for more *cohesion* across partnerships. A discrete approach to teaching functional skills was favoured by home schools, but this raises questions about whether learners will be given the opportunity to apply the skills in a broader context and whether the experience of principal learning varies according to the different delivery methods of functional skills. It is also recognised that young people might do well in other areas of the Diploma but might find functional skills too demanding. Although there was some evidence of a broader additional and specialist learning offer than in Gateway 1 consortia, there was recognition that consortium-wide approaches to this would be beneficial if universally adopted by institutions.

## 4. Information, Advice and Guidance about Diplomas

### Key findings

- Overall, the majority of case-study areas had a consortium-wide strategy for IAG in place and generally it was believed to have been to some extent successful.
- The majority of learners from consortia with a more widely adopted consortium-wide strategy for IAG had a good understanding of the qualification. There was also some understanding in consortia areas where there was a less successful overall consortium-wide strategy or no strategy for IAG; however, knowledge varied between institutions.
- The implementation of consortium-wide strategies by institutions was not always consistent and some schools were providing little or no IAG on Diplomas. Due to the influence of schools on learners' decision-making, this lack of information being provided within the school reduced the impact of the consortium-wide strategy on young people's awareness and knowledge of Diplomas.
- Strong and clear communication from the consortium lead to the institutions relating to IAG and the promotion of Diplomas was viewed as vital to ensure learners across the consortium received accurate, consistent and comprehensive IAG.

### Recommendations

- The most commonly suggested improvement by both consortium leads and senior leaders in institutions was a need to make IAG on Diplomas more coordinated or systematic through the full implementation of consortia-wide IAG strategies.
- It might be the case that all teaching staff, not just careers coordinators, should receive training or information on Diplomas so that learners receive clear and accurate advice from whoever they turn to for guidance within the institution.

This chapter provides an overview of the strategies adopted by consortia and institutions to promote the Diploma and to give learners information, advice and guidance (IAG). It also explores the success of these strategies, experiences of the learners and the impact of IAG on the learners' knowledge and understanding of Diplomas.

### 4.1 Promotion and IAG strategies

#### 4.1.1 Consortium-level strategies for promotion and IAG

The majority of the consortium leads in the case-study areas (ten of the 15) stated that there was a consortium-wide strategy for the promotion of Diplomas. Generally, the strategy consisted of a number of activities at consortium level similar to those

reported in the January 2009 Gateway 1 Baseline Report<sup>15</sup>. The strategies commonly included a number of the following:

- Diploma-specific events such as taster days, Diploma days or road shows (nine consortia)
- Training on or raising awareness of Diplomas for Connexions personal advisers (eight consortia)
- The development of consortium-specific promotional materials such as leaflets, booklets and posters (five consortia)
- Talks by line of learning leads or consortium leads in schools (five consortia)
- Common application processes (two consortia)
- Events in schools, such as careers fairs (two consortia)
- Coordinated options evenings to ensure the consortium lead could attend all events (one consortium).

Five consortia did not have a consortium-wide strategy for IAG for Diplomas. In these cases it was the responsibility of either the line of learning leads or the individual institutions to promote Diplomas and provide relevant information. In one area, in which the responsibility was left to the institutions, the reason for not having a consortium-wide strategy was that providers only recruited learners from their own cohort onto in-house Diplomas.

#### 4.1.2 Success of consortium-wide strategies

For those ten consortia with consortium-wide strategies, the majority felt the strategy had been at least to some extent successful. For example one line of learning lead said:

*I think they [the young people] understand it, there was lots of information at the roadshow and the open evenings.....I interviewed them all... I made it clear that they have to do it [all elements of the Diploma] all.*

It was often felt that good practice as limited to specific areas rather than widespread across the consortium. This was due to some schools in the consortia reportedly not being as willing as others to promote the Diplomas. For example there was evidence in eight consortia (from either consortium leads or institution senior leaders) that certain schools had not allowed the consortium lead or line of learning leads to speak to the students, thus limiting the impact of the promotion across the consortium. It was felt that schools have a lot of influence over the options chosen by learners and therefore the efforts of the consortium to promote the Diplomas consistently can be undermined by schools not continuing this promotion internally or not providing IAG to learners regarding the Diplomas.

This finding was also supported by institution senior leaders and teachers. For example, one teacher commented:

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<sup>15</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW0798>

*One school had done no more than have one page on the Diploma at the back of a thick options booklet, and it was a general piece, not about the different lines of learning.*

The reasoning for this lack of promotion in some schools was thought on occasion to be motivated by unease over numbers of students that might (or might not) enrol on existing subjects and courses. Indeed, one provider explained:

*How independent is that advice and guidance when the persons [teachers] giving that advice, when their job might be on the line?*

It was felt that a lot more work would be needed to break down barriers and encourage putting the interests of young people first.

In a minority of cases, where there was evidence of a consortium-wide strategy for IAG, not all institutions were aware of that strategy. One institution manager explained that the strategy in their area had not been filtered down successfully to providers. In areas such as this the quality of IAG varied by provider.

Overall, the evidence from these 15 case-study consortia shows that implementing a consortium-wide strategy for IAG is challenging, and in most cases has yet to be fully achieved; putting the strategy into action consistently at institution level was proving in particular to be challenging.

#### **4.1.3 Institution-level strategies for promotion and IAG**

The strategies adopted by institutions were mainly implemented through their existing IAG programmes. The majority of information and advice was aimed at Year 9 learners. Generally there was less evidence that schools without a sixth form were promoting Diplomas to Year 11 students. Additionally those with sixth forms provided more comprehensive information on courses they would be delivering in-house. Instead post-16 institutions would promote the courses through their own open evenings and course booklets.

The most commonly cited method (in 14 of the 15 consortia) of providing IAG and therefore promoting Diplomas to learners was through options evenings. In addition to taster sessions mentioned by consortium leads (see section 4.1.2), options booklets were another popular way of providing learners with information about the Diplomas. Other methods included providing Diploma-specific evenings and one-to-one meetings or interviews carried out by institution or Connexions staff with learners who had chosen to study a Diploma.

There was evidence that more extensive awareness-raising of Diplomas was impeded by various factors, including for example:

- The level of priority schools gave Diplomas.
- The degree of support from Connexions Personal Advisers. As discussed later in this chapter, very few learners identified Connexions as being involved in providing them with information on options.
- The knowledge of teaching staff. This was felt to be an area for development as learners were likely to ask their teachers about particular options when making decisions (although it was recognised that providing comprehensive IAG would become easier once delivery of the qualification had begun).



#### 4.1.4 Promotion of Diplomas and IAG for parents

Schools across all consortia stated that they provided information on Diplomas for parents at open evenings, options evenings or parents' evenings. The majority of schools also stated that parents could get information on Diplomas from the options booklet. In terms of Diploma-specific information, a small number of schools had invited parents to Diploma evenings or events whilst others had sent parents leaflets, booklets and CDs specific to the Diplomas.

Institutions in four consortia stated that they held one-to-one interviews with learners applying for a Diploma and invited the parents to take part in that interview. In these instances, it was reported that generally parents had not received a great deal of information about Diplomas prior to this interview.

Many of these activities, such as options evenings, relied on parents actively attending and success was felt to be limited where parents had chosen not to attend, as was the case in one institution where the IAG coordinator said:

*Parent attendance at Year 11 interviews with Connexions staff was around 30 per cent, for Year 9 parents it was lower.*

In such examples, interviewees felt this lack of knowledge meant parents would not be able to provide accurate information or advice to their children.

#### 4.1.5 Experiences of young people

Both potential Diploma and non-Diploma learners mentioned a variety of ways in which they had received IAG. Generally learners identified all the methods highlighted by the consortia and institutions in their IAG strategies. The only exception to this was the information provided by Connexions personal advisers which was highlighted by the majority of consortium leads to be an important part of the IAG strategy but was mentioned by very few learners. As Connexions personal advisers have different roles in different institutions it might be that case-study institutions had little current involvement with them.

In the majority of institutions, learners who had chosen to study a Diploma as well as those who had chosen not to do so, reported that they had received some information about the Diplomas. However, the amount of information received varied, for example some learners had received Diploma-specific leaflets, or attended taster sessions whilst others had heard them mentioned in a general presentation given on options. Some learners had initially been interested in studying a Diploma and had attended a taster day for that Diploma subject but had made an informed choice not to study the Diploma as they wanted to do a more practically-based course. In these instances the learners had chosen to study, for example, NVQs.

In four consortia, learners who had not chosen to study a Diploma did not feel they had received enough information regarding Diplomas. For example, one Year 11 learner stated '*I didn't even know what a Diploma was until a week ago*', whilst a small proportion of Year 9 learners did not feel they had received much information and had found options evenings too busy to collect any useful information on options.

In contrast, young people from one consortium who had not chosen to study a Diploma felt they had received too much information on the Diplomas, in comparison to the information they had received on other options and therefore felt they were being 'sold' the Diploma.

#### 4.1.6 Suggested Improvements

The most commonly suggested improvement by both consortium leads and senior leaders in institutions was a need to make IAG on Diplomas more coordinated or systematic through the full implementation of consortium-wide IAG strategies. It was felt that this would ensure that learners across the whole consortium would receive the same messages on Diplomas, whereas currently it was felt that, in some consortia, there was inconsistency across institutions.

A small number of institutions believed that IAG needed to start earlier in the students' school career. Some institutions suggested starting IAG in Year 8; others felt it needed to begin earlier, before the students arrived in Year 7. Other suggested improvements included providing more taster days and involving employers in talking to students about the types of qualifications and skills that are important to employers.

Institutions from four consortia felt that they would not need to make any improvements to their IAG and promotion relating to Diplomas. This was generally because they felt it was well coordinated and the number of learners applying was deemed to be successful. Others felt that, as an institution, they could not do any more to ensure learners, parents and guardians were aware of the options available to students in Year 9, as pointed out by an interviewee with responsibility for IAG:

*They're [open days] really well-coordinated, not overlapping. [the school] and [the college] held them on the same Saturday - they're just across the road from each other - so students could easily dip into both. If you live some way away, you didn't have to do two trips. It shows they're working together, not competing.*

#### 4.1.7 Learning from Gateway 1

To some extent Gateway 2 consortia had learned from the experience of promoting Diplomas in Gateway 1. As a result of Gateway 1 experience interviewees reported that they had:

- sought to raise awareness more widely among Connexions PAs and school staff to ensure the correct information about Diplomas was relayed to learners
- developed clearer information for learners and parents to assist their understanding of what the qualification included / entailed
- ensured that there was clarity in information provided to learners regarding the composition of the Diploma as Gateway 1 learners had anticipated more practical elements than was the case in practice.

#### 4.1.8 Gender stereotyping

Staff in institutions, consortium leads and line of learning leads were all generally aware of the potential for gender stereotyping in certain lines of learning. For example, this was not seen to be an issue in certain subject areas such as Business and Finance, IT and Hospitality, but was an issue for Hair and Beauty Studies and Society, Health and Development which attracted more females and in Construction and the Built Environment and Engineering which attracted more male students.



The majority of institutions did not report having a specific strategy for reducing gender stereotyping; instead some institutions were targeting specific subject areas. Although there was no evidence of success yet, the methods for addressing gender stereotyping included:

- To try and encourage more male students to study Hair and Beauty Studies, consortia were using pictures of male students in brochures and using current male students to promote the courses.
- To encourage more male students to undertake a Society, Health and Development Diploma consortia were using male employees in related industries and current male students as case studies.
- To encourage more female learners to apply for the Engineering Diploma and engineering courses generally, one consortium was working with local employers to promote Diploma courses to female students.
- One institution was running a 'Girls into Construction' event to encourage more female learners onto Construction and the Built Environment.
- To encourage male students onto the Creative and Media Diploma, one institution put on a performance from an all-male dance troupe.

More general methods used to address gender stereotyping included using both male and female images in brochures, discussing the issue of gender stereotyping as part of careers education in PSHE lessons, drama plays on gender stereotyping, visits to local companies and having employers visiting the institution to speak with learners.

Whilst institutions were generally trying to combat the issue of gender stereotyping in particular courses, there was a general consensus that that issue was bigger than could be addressed through careers education and IAG in schools. It was felt that role models, family, peer pressure and the media all play a role in enforcing gender stereotypes. For example one consortium lead commented:

*It's always going to be an issue - hair and beauty is seen as for girls and we try to combat it but at the end of the day they make their own choices. We can only do so much and it is a reflection of society.*

## **4.2 Understanding of Diplomas**

In terms of perceptions of Diplomas, of those staff who felt able to express a view, approximately half felt that young people viewed Diplomas as practical courses and staff believed there was less understanding of the theory involved. However data from the students suggests that many felt they understood the theoretical nature of the course. Some institutions felt there was a cultural view that the Diplomas were not for the academic-minded learners, while other institutions felt that they had finally moved away from this perception and learners generally perceived the level 2 qualification to be of equal status to GCSEs. These issues are explored further below.

### **4.2.1 Diploma learners' understanding of the Diploma**

The majority of learners who had applied to study a Diploma in the next academic year believed they had a good understanding of certain elements of the qualification.

This was particularly true of those learners from consortia where the consortium-wide approach to IAG was deemed to be successful. There was less widespread understanding in consortia where there had not been a consortium-wide approach, with limited understanding in some institutions and a lack of understanding in others. Learners generally understood the principal learning, including the different topics to be covered and the importance of coursework. Learners also understood the number of days they would be studying the Diploma per week and where they would be studying that course (for example, within their school or at college). This was corroborated by teaching staff who believed learners had a good level of knowledge regarding course content. For example, one learner commented:

*It's 15 per cent exam and the rest is coursework. We have to do a project, but we have a year to do it and have to give a presentation at the end [...]. I come to the college Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday morning and all day Friday. The rest of the time I'm at school and do English, maths, science and P.E.*

However, it was clear also that learners generally lacked knowledge about certain areas of the Diploma, including the assessment, functional skills and the GCSE equivalence of the Diploma. Learners also lacked awareness of additional and specialist learning but it was unclear whether the learners lacked knowledge of what this element of the Diploma meant to them or whether they were unfamiliar with this particular term.

Learners in some institutions, in four of the 15 case-study areas, did have good, detailed knowledge of the Diploma qualification and seemed very well informed. Conversely, learners from two consortia (where there was little evidence of embedded consortium-wide strategies) had very little knowledge of the Diploma. In these cases the learners were able to identify the subject they would be studying but were unable to supply any further details. For example one learner who had chosen the IT Diploma commented '*It's just IT and that.*' Other learners felt that they had been given the information but that they had forgotten the details.

The Diploma learners were asked what they perceived the **benefits** would be of studying a Diploma. The commonly cited benefit was seen to be helping them in the future, for example to get into college or with career choices. Some learners stated it would help their education. Others felt that studying for a Diploma would put them ahead of those who had not done a Diploma or that employers would be more interested in Diplomas than other qualifications because it was new. Learners also felt it would help them to get real-life experience of their chosen career.

Whilst the majority of perceived benefits cited by learners focused on their future career and education, it was common for learners to report that the main benefit was studying a subject they enjoy. One learner commented:

*Doing the Business Diploma makes it more interesting at the moment. Because the financial downturn that's happened now. It makes it more interesting for us to do Business, because we learn about what's happening and what we need to do to prevent stuff like that.*

Learners were also asked what they perceived the main **challenges** to be of choosing to study a Diploma. The most commonly cited challenge related to learners having less choice, or fewer options to choose with regard to other subjects, as the Diploma was perceived to be such a large qualification (see Chapter 5 for more detail). In certain schools, this was a particular issue when the school also had a specialism and therefore learners had to study that subject at GCSE. This meant that

learners selecting the Diploma were unable to choose another option; with some learners stating they would have to give up subjects they enjoyed to study the Diploma. For example, one learner commented *'It's the only option you can pick if you do it.'*

Other perceived challenges included keeping up with the amount of coursework, worries about failing aspects of the Diploma, the travel to college and the unknown element due to the Diploma being a new qualification.

#### **4.2.2 Non-Diploma learners' understanding of the Diploma**

Students who had not opted to take a Diploma were asked to describe what they knew about Diplomas. These young people generally had less knowledge of the Diplomas compared with those who had chosen to take a Diploma. They knew, for example, the lines of learning available but little detail of the Diploma. This lack of knowledge may have been because these learners had not actively sought information on the Diploma, For example, one learner explained:

*You don't know that much unless you have properly looked into it and you were seriously considering it.*

Related to this, some institutions only gave information about Diplomas to those students who had shown an interest in the qualification, rather than providing the information to all young people.

Some learners felt they would have liked more information on the Diplomas and indicated that potentially they would have considered choosing a Diploma if they had known more. For example a group of Year 11 students stated that they would have liked more information relating to the Diploma lines of learning they could study, how much the qualification would be worth with regards to UCAS points or A Level equivalence and the progression that might follow on from the Diploma.

Learners in four consortia appeared to be better informed and were able to list the Diploma lines of learning available, and knew where different aspects of the Diploma would be delivered. They also understood that Diplomas were offered at different levels.

The students from these four consortia with the most in-depth knowledge were able to describe topics that would be covered in the principal learning as well as other details of the Diploma. These learners had attended a taster session on the Diploma and had gained their knowledge from this event which was something they had actively chosen to attend because they were interested in the Diploma. For example, one learner who had chosen an NVQ hairdressing course instead of the Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma after attending a taster session explained:

*The Diploma's got science in it and there's a lot more writing. It's less hands-on. The NVQ is more hands-on, no science.*

Other learners, with less knowledge of the Diplomas, had misconceptions of what Diplomas would involve. Some thought it was a purely practical course. For example, one learner on the Construction and the Built Environment Diploma stated: *'it's for boys, it's bricklaying.'* Others felt it was worth up to 17 GCSEs. Others believed it was for those learners who had a chosen career path, as highlighted by one learner:

*Diplomas are for those who know what they want to do - the area they want to go into.*

These learners therefore felt the Diploma was not suitable for young people who had not yet decided on a career path.

### 4.3 Summary

Overall, the evidence from these 15 case-study consortia shows that implementing a consortium-wide strategy for IAG is challenging, and in most cases has yet to be fully achieved as putting the strategy into action consistently at institution level is proving to be particularly challenging. The amount of information learners received about the Diploma varied between institutions; some learners had very detailed knowledge whilst in different consortia, others had a very basic understanding of what a Diploma qualification entailed. As such there is a need for clear and consistent communication across, and within, the consortia to encourage institutions to ensure that learners receive accurate, detailed and consistent IAG.

After considering the nature and role of IAG within Diplomas, the effect of the IAG strategies adopted on recruitment to the Diplomas is explored in the next chapter.

## 5. Diploma recruitment strategies

### Key findings

- Entry requirements for Level 2 Diplomas were most often set at a minimum of key stage 3 Level 5 in two of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and a Level 4 in the remaining subject. Further consideration was given to capability to achieve Level 2 in functional skills and proven learning characteristics. There was some limited emerging evidence of further refinement by line of learning.
- There was some evidence of targeting young people for Diplomas either in terms of encouraging young people with appropriate academic ability and vocational interest to consider Diplomas or discouraging those perceived to be most academically able.
- Take-up of Diplomas for September 2009 was predicted to be lower than was originally anticipated in Gateway applications. Contributory factors included insufficient IAG to fully inform young people, that was inconsistently applied across all institutions, and the perceived strength of some competing qualifications in niche areas.
- Young people appeared to need more information particularly with regard to additional and specialist learning choices *within* the Diploma, and *concurrent* subjects studied alongside the Diploma, in order to challenge perceptions that Diplomas constrain other options.

### Recommendations

- In view of limited emerging evidence of refinement of entry requirements by line of learning, consortia may benefit from consortium-wide agreement over entry requirements by line of learning and level.
- It is recommended that all institutions are encouraged to inform all young people about the different aspects of the Diploma so students can, with guidance, make their own informed choice.
- As well as more extensive IAG, further consortium and institution strategic support might be of value to enhance further collaborative good practice with regard to all 14-19 provision (including Diplomas) so that institutions in each consortium are working in the best interests of each young person.
- In order to challenge perceptions that Diplomas constrain other options, consortia might wish to consider how best to provide more information to young people on subject choices within, and in addition to, the Diploma. Additionally parents should receive appropriate information to enable them to fittingly advise their children.

This chapter examines entry requirements and anticipated levels of recruitment for Diplomas starting in September 2009. It also explores the factors which influenced young people's decisions to take a Diploma or not. It illustrates how some of the issues of collaborative cohesion outlined in chapter 3 impact (potentially) on take-up of Diplomas. It is worth noting that interviews took place in the spring prior to 2009 delivery when young people were in the process of making their option choices.

## 5.1 Entry requirements for the Diploma

Consistent with reported entry requirements for September 2008 Diplomas<sup>16</sup>, the majority of case-study institutions preparing for delivery of **Level 2** Diplomas for the first time in 2009, appeared to require learners to be working at a minimum of key stage 3 Level 5 in two of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and at Level 4 in the remaining subject. However, there was evidence in two (phase 2 only) consortia that entry requirements were further refined by line of learning. In one case, there was city-wide agreement by line of learning for example that Hair and Beauty Studies required students to be working at Level 6 in science at key stage 3, and for Society, Health and Development work at Level 5 across all three core subjects was felt to be necessary. In the other consortium, where entry requirements appeared to be set at institution level, there was evidence of different entry requirements for different lines of learning, for example work at Level 6 in mathematics at key stage 3 was viewed as essential for Engineering by one institution.

Additionally in 2009 entry requirements were reported to be driven by the suitability of the young person in terms of:

- predicted GCSE grades, for example that a young person was predicted to achieve five A\*- C grades or C grades in mathematics and English (four consortia)
- capability to achieve Level 2 at functional skills, described by a senior leader as '*a powerful selection tool*' (seven consortia) and
- proven learning characteristics, for example a history of good behaviour and attendance, motivation and interest in the Diploma line and the capability to work independently and travel to learn (eight consortia).

In terms of **Level 1** only three line of learning leads had set entry requirements of the ability to achieve Level 1 at functional skills, to be working at key stage level 3 and to have the ability to travel independently.

The **Level 3 Diploma** reportedly required achievement of five A\* - Cs, or an equivalent achievement in a different qualification, generally including mathematics and English, as these subjects were perceived to be necessary for functional skills. For example, according to one senior leader '*if there is any doubt with literacy or numeracy they will struggle with functional skills*'. While on the whole, the entry requirements were common across the consortia, and primarily based on achievement of qualifications, there was evidence in one consortium of a separate assessment being made to determine whether students were appropriate for the course. There is the potential for such an approach to lead to differences in the

<sup>16</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW0798>

attainment of learners pursuing a Level 3 Diploma in different parts of the consortium. This might suggest a need for agreed consortium-wide Diploma entry requirements at each level so learners could tackle all elements of the Diploma with similar prior levels of achievement.

In terms of **targeting** learners for the Level 2 Diploma, although many staff said that the Diplomas were open to all young people, there was some evidence in six consortia that some more academically capable young people were reportedly being informally targeted; was for example a senior institutional manager reported aiming the Diplomas at *'more able students'*. Another senior manager further explained that not only academic ability but also vocational interest were important: *'not pure academics, but those young people on mid vocational/academic pathways are the most suitable [for the Diploma]'*. A consortium lead in a further area described a system of selection based on academic ability and motivated by the need for attainment: *'[there is] cherry-picking for Level 2 because of the functional skills issue and the costs involved'*.

In contrast in five consortia there was some evidence of either more academically able young people being encouraged **not** to take up a Diploma (for example being *'steered away from the Diploma'*) or the Diploma being considered more appropriate for young people perceived to have 'lower' academic ability (in which case they might not be working at a minimum of key stage 3 Level 5 in two, and at Level 4 in one core subject). One consortium lead described *'tension'* within the consortium as headteachers were reportedly trying to retain their more academically able students in school so that there was minimum impact on their institution's apparent performance when key stage 4 results are published. Another consortium lead said that some schools were uncomfortable with *'high fliers'* opting to do a Diploma because they were uneasy about future progression routes. These motivations point to a possible need for further reassurances with regard to progression routes for Diploma learners, the young people for whom the Diploma might be considered appropriate and further discussion on the future, if any, of the availability of attainment data for whole consortia in addition to data on individual institutions.

Teachers who had responsibility for careers information, advice and guidance were asked whether they felt young people experienced any **restrictions on their choice of options**. It was apparent that, in addition to the entry requirements and the informal targeting outlined above, the model of key stage 4 options systems (as described in detail in the 2009 report on preparation for 2008 delivery<sup>17</sup>) inherently restricted the young person's choice (see also chapter 4.2 'Learners' understanding of Diplomas'). Choice would either be dependent on the 'pathway' they were on, or, if the school operated an 'options' system, there was, generally little other choice after the 'core' subjects were included as the Diploma took up so many option blocks.

Additionally, there was some evidence to suggest that young people were also restricted in their choices by the range, quality and impartiality of the IAG they received (see chapter 4 'IAG about Diplomas' for more detail). It is recommended that for young people to make fully informed option choices they might need to understand the Diploma entry requirements and the reasons for them.

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<sup>17</sup> O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G. Shuayb, M., Golden, S. NFER and Haynes, G, University of Exeter. (2009). *National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Deliver.*, DCSF: London.



## 5.2 Anticipated levels of recruitment

As was the case with the take-up of the first five Diploma lines in 2008, take-up of Diplomas for September 2009 was predicted to be lower than was originally anticipated in Gateway 2 applications. This was the case in all but three consortia. Where take-up was likely to be higher, this was forecasted to be on Creative and Media Level 3 in one consortium, and at Level 2 on Engineering in another (due to the fact that low take-up meant that Manufacturing and Product Design was not running) and on Society, Health and Development and Hair and Beauty Studies in another consortium.

Anticipated lower take-up was found to be linked to:

- **IAG-related reasons** (nine consortia), such as the perception that taking a Diploma would restrict choice, due to its size and number of components, and that young people would feel they were restricted to one subject. Additionally in some consortia there was evidence of insufficient IAG resulting in young people not, for example, understanding what the Hospitality Diploma actually entailed. Similarly some interviewees felt that the Diploma content needed to be explained in detail, for example one senior leader felt that despite informing young people that Construction and the Built Environment was almost entirely applied learning, students persisted in believing that it was practically based. The titles of the Diplomas were felt to influence young people's perceptions of the qualifications as illustrated by the comment of a senior leader that *'some Diplomas have sexy titles, like Creative and Media, but others don't, like Society, Health and Development'*. This underlines the importance of young people receiving comprehensive IAG which fully informs them of the content of the different Diplomas.

Additionally, according to consortia leads, institutional IAG was not always perceived to be impartial (see chapter 4 'IAG about Diplomas' for more detail) and, in some cases, there was still a perception that IAG was being received too late by young people. This could be as a consequence of the line of learning lead post being filled too late in the term to affect the options process or because some schools were slow to inform students. For example, one senior school leader said *'some schools have not even told their children about it [the Diploma]'*.

Consortia leads and line of learning leads also recognised the important role that parents play in influencing and supporting young people (see section 5.3 below) in their choices. One line of learning lead (in a phase 2 only consortium) felt that parents were ill-informed and observed:

*I think that schools haven't done enough to get the message and understanding across to parents. Would you let your child who is going to do A Levels take the Advanced Diploma? I don't think you would.*

- **collaborative issues** (eight consortia). There were reports in five consortia that fewer schools than originally anticipated were involved in collaborative Diploma delivery. Schools had ceased their involvement or were delivering Diplomas in-house only. As emerged in analysis of models of delivery in phase 1<sup>18</sup>, this

<sup>18</sup> O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G. Shuayb, M., Golden, S. NFER and Haynes, G, University of Exeter. (2009). *National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery*, DCSF: London.

appeared to be linked to either a reluctance to send students to another institution because it was felt to be not necessarily in the best interests of the young person, or to an apparent concern about reduced in-house student numbers, as explained by one senior manager who said *'I think you'll find in the take-up data that you have less take-up at Level 3....because schools fear it [the Diploma] threatens their sixth forms'*. Additionally there was a view held by interviewees in three consortia that there was a lack of consortium-wide communication and institutions were said to be *'not working together'*. See Chapter 3 for more details on delivery.

- **competing qualifications** (six consortia). Although interviews were conducted at a comparatively early stage in the implementation of Diplomas, take-up was believed to be lower in some consortia, for some lines of learning, because competing qualifications had a fairly secure hold. For example one consortium lead believed that 'young people and institutions prefer BTECs'. A senior institutional manager corroborated this when he stated:

*I think this [lower take up at Level 3] is because you've got pre-existing qualifications such as the BTEC and NVQ which are well-thought out qualifications, that employers trust and universities have just begun to understand.*

There was evidence that, in some areas of the curriculum, there was less of a current perceived need for the Diploma, as reflected in the following comments of a consortium lead and line of learning lead from two different consortia:

*schools prefer other qualifications for example Hospitality NVQ Level 1'*

*[Introducing the Hospitality Diploma] was difficult because the Diploma is competing with GCSE catering.*

Although it may be that take-up of Diplomas (and full understanding of the Diploma) will expand over time, and word-of-mouth publicity is likely to play a considerable part in further informing young people, it appears that further information, advice and guidance is needed at all levels (young people, parents, teachers, line of learning leads) in order to increase take-up (and achieve comprehensive understanding of the Diploma content and approach to learning). More specifically it might be worth re-emphasising:

- the breadth and depth of the Diploma including the additional and specialist learning, and the fact that additional GSCEs (or other qualifications) can, for example, be taken as part of the Diploma, thereby in effect widening the options taken
- the detail of the subject content and learning styles in each Diploma so learners (and staff and parents) can differentiate the Diploma from other qualifications and
- that although it is appreciated that young people (and their parents) will want evidence that universities will accept Diplomas for entry, nevertheless, in the meantime it might be worth considering further reassurance with regard to progression routes.

Additionally, it is suggested that further steps might be taken to support collaborative good practice with regard to all 14-19 provision (including Diplomas) so that each consortium is working in the best interests of each young person.

### 5.3 Influences on learners' choices

Motivations of those young people starting Diplomas in 2009 were similar to those starting in 2008<sup>19</sup>. There were, however, some subtle differences in viewpoints reported between those students who had selected a Diploma in contrast to those who had not. Young people were clearly influenced by internal motivations and external influences. Additionally it is possible that their different viewpoints reflect the range in IAG at institutional and consortia levels, even though clear evidence of different patterns of behaviour (in relation to influences) between consortia or Diploma lines did not emerge.

#### 5.3.1 Reasons for choosing to study a Diploma

The main motivation, across all consortia, for young people (mentioned by over half Diploma learners) selecting a Diploma was **interest in the Diploma subject**, linked in many cases to a perception that the subject matter of the Diploma would be **useful as it would lead to a particular job**. One young person explained that the overriding impetus for selection of her Diploma was the subject matter, not the Diploma approach:

*It's not really about the Diploma, I wanted to do hair and beauty together. I would have done the GCSE if that was the course on offer.*

Similarly many staff agreed and felt that students need to have a real interest in the subject matter of the Diploma. For a minority of Diploma learners the range and diversity of subjects within a Diploma, and the fact that it was perceived to keep options open, was viewed as positive, as explained by one young person:

*I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do when I was older, so I thought I would choose the Diploma, to keep my options open, in case I wanted to go into business.*

Approximately one third of Diploma learners said they selected the Diploma for reasons associated with **the 'applied' nature of the Diploma** and the industry links, for example:

- the practical, 'hands-on' approach (17 learners)
- the variety and range of activities (nine learners)
- the work-related learning and links with employers (eight learners), for example one commented *'it will give you some real work experience, so you know what you're going into'*
- the acquisition of relevant skills (six learners), for example one said *'it is made by employers, so it will have everything that an employer will want'*.

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<sup>19</sup> O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G. Shuayb, M., Golden, S. NFER and Haynes, G, University of Exeter. (2009). *National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Deliver.*, DCSF: London.

**Studying partly at another institution**, most commonly a FE college, was another reason for selecting the Diploma cited by a significant minority of learners. Young people reported being enthused by college facilities and by the prospect of new opportunities, for example *‘being treated like an adult’* and *‘meeting new people’*. Additionally the fact that the **Diploma was perceived to be a new qualification** was regarded positively by some learners. Both reasons were given by one young person who said:

*I liked the idea of doing something new because I like to be different. I can walk to college and I was glad to get away from school for some of the time because you get treated differently at college.*

In general, senior institutional managers and line of learning leads concurred with learners’ reported reasons for taking a Diploma. Additionally a considerable minority of young people and staff believed that parents were an influence on learners’ decisions to select (or not to select – see below) the Diploma. Many of those learners who chose the Diploma reported having the support of their parents and families, and furthermore a few appeared to be *influenced* by their parents in terms of the subject matter, for example where a father was a gardener and encouraged his son to take the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies. However, this influence, on the whole, appeared to steer the *subject* choice in contrast to the *type* of qualification. It is worth noting that in only three cases did students report selecting the Diploma when their parents had expressed concern over the qualification.

Overall, the evidence relating to why young people choose to take a Diploma reveals that the key factors are the nature of the subject matter, the belief that it would entail learning in a different, often more ‘applied’ way and because it would enable them to learn at a different institution. It is evident that these motivations were similar for those starting in 2008 and 2009 and suggests that these aspects could usefully be promoted to young people who might consider a Diploma in future. In addition, the importance of the subject matter to young people’s decisions indicates that there may be an increase in take-up as further lines of learning become available.

### 5.3.2 Reasons for not choosing to study a Diploma

One of the main reasons that students elected not to take a Diploma was because **the subject areas did not appeal to them**, and many said they would consider a Diploma in the future if it was in a subject of interest. However it is suggested that young people need to be made more aware of the diverse content within current Diplomas, as for example one student said she would have chosen a Diploma *‘if there had been a Dance, Media and Music Diploma I would have done it in the first place’*. Other examples included uncertainty with regard to the content of Hospitality and Hair and Beauty Studies.

In contrast to reasons for selecting to study a Diploma (where few students mentioned the issue of whether the Diploma did or did not restrict choice) students from ten consortia reported that one of the reasons why they had chosen *not* to take a Diploma related to the perception that **the Diploma restricted choice**, either from the viewpoint that it would restrict career avenues or that it would narrow current options studied as the following comments from learners illustrate:

*The Diploma is set in stone – your options are cut off*

*You can only do one thing with the Diploma and I wanted to do more.*

Some young people felt that if they did not select a Diploma, they could study more GCSEs, and that would '*open up your options*'. One learner reported wanting to do triple science and he would not have been able to if he had selected a Diploma, as he explained:

*I wanted to do a good variety of subjects in case I change my mind in future about my career.*

In addition, according to young people, several parents felt that the Diploma narrowed future options, for example: '*My mum said that it wasn't worth three GCSE options*'. This did not appear to be a consideration for Diploma learners, perhaps indicating that they were both better informed with regard to post-Diploma progression and they were less limited by, or were less concerned about restrictions on subjects taken concurrently with the Diploma.

A minority of young people in four consortia (rural and urban) decided against studying a Diploma because **they did not appear to like change** in terms of, for example, attending another institution or spending two consecutive days away from the home institution. Some students lacked confidence either to actually travel or to cope when at the host institution. For example, one learner commented:

*you might hate them [the other students] and you won't feel confident without your friends.*

Moreover there was a perception held by a few students that the home institution and GCSEs required less effort as they were said to be '*safer*' and that the '*newness*' of the qualification was off-putting and there were no previous students to talk to about Diplomas.

Some young people in four consortia (three of which reported not having a consortium-wide approach to IAG) said that they **did not choose a Diploma because they knew little about them**. For example, one student explained the reason that she and her peers had not chosen a Diploma, stating: '*I don't really know what it is so I can't decide if I want to do it*'. A number of students claimed that they would consider a Diploma in the future if they had more information on them, if it was in a subject that appealed to them or possibly if it was held in a different institution.

As with Diploma learners young people who had chosen not to take a Diploma similarly reported discussing the options with their parents and families and most provided support and were happy for the young person to study whatever they enjoyed. However there was a minority of students who felt that their parents had directed them away from Diplomas because they believed the subject or level was inappropriate for their child. For example one student had been interested in Hair and Beauty Studies and had attended the taster day but her '*mum told me that I'm too clever for hairdressing, that I could do something better than that. I found it interesting though*'. In addition a few parents were reported to think that the Diploma was not a good choice; one young person reported his father advised him not to do it as '*it may get wiped in the future as his qualifications [had been]*'. It is worth noting that the majority of young people who were advised against the Diploma by their families decided not to take it. This emphasises the importance of ensuring parents are well informed about Diplomas.

Although driven by interest in a subject and its perceived usefulness toward a career, there is evidence from this evaluation that young people are considerably influenced by the institution in which they study. They are stimulated by intrinsic motivation or

the extent of their awareness, promoted at institution level, of the Diploma. Additionally, institutions need to be as flexible as possible with regard to concurrent subjects studied alongside the Diploma to break down the perception that Diplomas restrict options.

## 5.4 Summary

Overall, Gateway 2 consortia were most often setting entry requirements for Level 2 Diplomas at a minimum of key stage 3 Level 5 in two of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and a Level 4 in the remaining subject. Further consideration was given to capability to achieve Level 2 at functional skills and proven learning characteristics. There was some limited emerging evidence of further refinement by line of learning.

In two-thirds of Gateway 2 consortia there was some evidence of targeting young people for Diplomas either in terms of encouraging those with academic ability and vocational interest to consider Diplomas or, in other institutions, discouraging those perceived to be most academically able.

In spring 2009, consortia leaders predicted that take-up of Diplomas for September 2009 would be lower than was originally anticipated in Gateway applications. This was largely because it appeared that IAG was not sufficient to fully inform young people, there were challenges in implementing cohesive collaborative working and because of the perceived strength of some competing qualifications in niche areas. Additionally young people wanted more information particularly with regard to additional and specialist learning choices *within* the Diploma, and *concurrent* subjects studied alongside the Diploma, in order to challenge an emerging perception that Diplomas constrain other options.

## 6. Training and Support for Diploma staff

### Key findings

- The consortium leads who were most positive about the training provided had received one-to-one support from a consultant or coach (a type of training which had been in demand during the planning year). Some consortium leads had chosen not to access any support for themselves as they felt that they already had the necessary skills to manage the change.
- Line of learning leads felt there was a '*plethora*' of Diploma training opportunities but the extent to which they had found training and support of use was dependent upon: the timing of the training, the specific course accessed and the combination (or package) of support opportunities taken up. There was some evidence that training aimed specifically at assisting line of learning leads with their unique role was in more abundance for staff involved in Gateway 2 (and had been an area of weakness identified by staff involved in Gateway 1).
- It was felt by both line of learning leads and other staff that the practitioner training course was still too generic; the extent to which they had found such training and support of use depended on whether or not additional courses, and thus supplementary information and guidance, had been accessed. The appropriateness of the "package" of training and support accessed was found to be just as important as the quality of individual courses.
- The various levels of consortium management had a role to play in identifying appropriate training opportunities for staff. Those who felt well supported by their consortium managers were most likely to have accessed a full range of training at the suitable time with regards to progress made and which they felt was appropriate to their needs.
- Consortia staff seemed to feel less well supported by consortia managers than had been the case for Gateway 1 staff. Consortium meetings and networking were also less likely to be identified as a source of support and some teachers even referred to a sense of isolation.

### Recommendations

- Further staff development might include:
- supporting additional networking
- examining support available to see if it can be made less generic and more relevant.
- continuing one-to-one support for consortium leads
- better signposting of training, and its content, direct to practitioners

This chapter outlines the types of training and support accessed by both consortium level and institution level staff, and details its reported usefulness. It will also look into continuing professional development (CPD) strategies as reported by consortium staff and the influence of these on staff development.



## 6.1 Training and support at the strategic consortium level

### 6.1.1 Consortium leads' experience

Reflecting on support and training, most consortium leads were positive overall about the support received. In particular, five consortium leads were enthusiastic about the **guidance received from coaches or consultants** (a resource available as part of the leadership element of the Diploma support offer). The coaches were able to provide personal support in a number of ways, for example as a '*sounding board*' for the consortium lead to discuss issues specific to the area or to assist with areas of weakness such as quality assurance frameworks or methods of change management. Some helped the consortium lead to identify support needs and the relevant provision. The personal relationship, trust and mutual respect built between the mentor and consortium lead was important. One consortium lead described their coach as '*excellent, informative and supportive*'.

Three consortium leads had not accessed any training and support. Of those, two explained that they had chosen not to take advantage of the support on offer and were adamant that they already had the project management and change management skills necessary to implement this reform. For example, one consortium lead said, '*It's largely on my own personal experience that we have got to where we are*'.

There was limited evidence (for example only one or two mentions) in approximately half of the consortia starting Diploma delivery in 2009 to suggest that they had benefitted from the experiences of Gateway 1 consortia. This method of learning was not found to be widespread and tended to rely on consortia or line of learning leads networking or approaching existing contacts, rather than any formal programme of events or dissemination of best practice.

### 6.1.2 Line of learning leads' experience

Line of learning leads were generally in agreement that there was a wide range of Diploma training opportunities but the extent to which they agreed that training and support was useful depended on:

- **The type of course accessed.** While some had accessed the more generic practitioner training, others had attended line of learning specific courses or ones relating to their role as leaders. For example, the content and approach of a workforce development training programme was felt to have been useful as one line of learning felt it had enabled her to:

*reflect on my own role and how to interact with others, especially in a partnership setting. It was more like coaching.*

Her colleague said of the course:

*it was very useful as it allowed us to consider issues to do with facilities and resources, along with staffing and sessions on quality assurance and personal, learning and thinking skills.*

These interviewees had also received '*support conversations*' from a national Diploma training organisation, part of which involved a discussion on further support needs.

It would seem therefore that there has been some improvement in the perceptions of training and support specifically targeted at line of learning leads (as long as they were able to access it). This had been identified as an area of weakness by Gateway 1 consortia<sup>20</sup>.

- **The “package” of support.** Those who had accessed only one type of training, for example, were more likely to have been disappointed by the content, while those who had built on the initial practitioner training were more positive. This suggests that line of learning leads need to proactively access more than just the national practitioner training in order to supplement and build on their knowledge, and should not expect to absorb all the relevant information from one course.
- **The timing of the course or programme.** It was important for the course to be at the appropriate time. For example, some interviewees felt they had made particular progress in an area or had read enough around it to have a good basic understanding, and wanted a course to provide detail. If the course did not consolidate knowledge, interviewees reported feeling frustrated.
- **The availability of funding and time.** Attendance on courses was reliant on both the availability of funding and sufficient time to plan ahead and attend training. Both these factors influenced the extent to which a full and appropriate package of support could be accessed.

Line of learning leads (across five consortia) who felt well supported by their consortium lead were slightly more positive about the training courses and programmes they had attended.

In contrast, line of learning leads across six consortia were less positive about or disagreed on the extent to which their consortium lead had been supportive. This lack of support appeared to influence the extent to which they had found training to be useful. Some felt they had been left to identify their own training, as one expressed it to: *‘feel our own way’* and spoke of the need to be proactive because, they felt, the consortium lead was not. For example, one said:

*I haven’t been relying on the consortium lead to provide training.*

Good communication and interaction between consortium and line of learning leads enabled the former to identify the latter’s needs and play a role in identifying appropriate training and support opportunities. In fact the need to fulfil a “gatekeeper” role was highlighted as a key change in approach by some consortium leads interviewed as part of the follow up visits to Gateway 1 consortia.

## 6.2 Training and support at the institution level

Where strategies for continuing professional development (CPD) existed at the consortium level, these tended to target resources at the line of learning leads with a priority to cascade information to the institution level. This meant that the majority of school managers interviewed generally had access to the practitioner training and

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<sup>20</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

attended talks held by DCSF at their own institution which gave an overview of the Diploma. The extent to which training and support in relation to more specific aspects of the Diploma had been accessed varied across consortia.

Diploma staff interviewed within institutions across eight consortia had not found the practitioner training (which was open to all) useful, and found the content relating to the world of work of more use than the rest of the course which was found to be too generic. Some comments indicated that the course had not been pitched at the right level and that they found it patronising. Most felt that the facilitators were not expert enough, that the course had been delivered too late and that the content was not detailed enough but aimed to sell the Diploma. This echoed the attitude of practitioners interviewed when preparing for 2008 delivery<sup>21</sup>, who also felt that the course was too focused on promoting the Diploma to staff who were engaged with it.

Some consortium leads or line of learning leads had taken a more proactive approach to mapping the needs of Diploma staff and clearly had directed resources towards releasing them for training. This meant that staff had been given the opportunity to attend, for example, conferences, assessment training, learning visits to other consortia and had had the opportunity to shadow professionals working in the area of their line of learning. One school manager said that a visit to a Gateway 1 consortium had '*enthused*' them (emphasising the importance of dissemination of Gateway 1 experiences). She said: '*the learners were so enthusiastic. It totally removed any doubts about the benefits for some learners*'.

School managers across eight consortia reported that they or other staff in their institution had been on more specific training related to for example, assessment or functional skills. Training related to sector skills was only mentioned in relation to Hair and Beauty Studies where some staff had been given extra support to enhance their skills in areas such as African-Caribbean hairdressing and male barbering or the scientific aspects of the course.

It was evident that interviewees in Gateway 2 case-study areas were less likely than those interviewed when planning for delivery in 2008<sup>22</sup> to identify consortium meetings and networking as a source of support. This would seem to reflect the fact that staff felt generally less well supported by their consortium leads in 2009 and, in some cases their line of learning leads, than had been the case for those interviewed in 2008. Some referred to a feeling of isolation, for example one school manager in a rural area said:

*we do feel a bit out on the limb and left to fend for ourselves..because there are not that many schools involved in this line of learning it's just us, the college and a few kids from another school...where there are more schools in a fairly small area it is easier for them to get together and sort issues but we are on the edge.*

The contrast between the perceived level of support received by institution level staff in Gateway1 and Gateway 2 consortia may be related to less apparent cohesion in some Gateway 2 consortia (as explained in chapter 2).

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<sup>21</sup> See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&>

<sup>22</sup>.Ibid

In one consortium with a “hub” model where staff felt particularly well supported, staff praised the consortium lead for making sure that meetings happened and were attended by the right people. This consortium had employed two consortium leads in a direct effort to ensure there was somebody to fulfil this more operational, as distinct from strategic, role.

The majority of staff responsible for IAG had gained information at the consortium level, mainly through more general talks that were delivered to all staff as an awareness raising activity. Although IAG staff themselves did not perceive a need for further training and support to enable them to fulfil their role in advising learners and parents about Diplomas, as noted in Chapter 5, the variation in IAG provided to learners, and their understanding of Diplomas, suggests that there would be value in further CPD relating to Diplomas for IAG staff.

Some staff responsible for IAG had attended conferences which either focused on or touched on Diplomas as part of the 14-19 landscape and many mentioned that they had been given leaflets about the qualification or attended 14-19 partnership meetings which had mentioned Diplomas. It was evident that IAG staff would value further information for example relating to:

- which kind of learner should be advised to take the Diploma
- how to educate young people to make the right decisions
- how to advise young people to consider whether or not they are suited to the Diplomas
- what the implications are of taking the course.

## 6.3 Summary

On the whole training and support provided were received more positively by staff in these Gateway 2 consortia planning for 2009 delivery than had been the case among the Gateway 1 consortia visited in 2008. Consortium leads were generally positive about the training provided especially in terms of one-to-one support from consultants. Line of learning leads appreciated ‘packages’ of generic and specific training especially when the timing facilitated consolidation of learning. At institutional level there appeared to be scope for further training and support for careers coordinators and other staff from whom young people might seek guidance about their qualification choices.

Despite the overall improvement in attitudes towards training and support, there are still some outstanding issues relating to the quality and timing of the practitioner training. In addition to this, interviews with practitioners in 2009 indicated that an effective consortium, along with the development and implementation of CPD strategies also had a clear part to play in whether or not the training and support accessed was deemed to be appropriate. As not all Diploma staff had the support necessary from their consortium management, and found that they had to take a proactive role in identifying CPD for themselves, it may be that courses and their content could be better signposted for practitioners in the future.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

This report has explored the experience of preparing for implementing the Diplomas from September 2009 based on the case-study visits to 15 of the Gateway 2 consortia. Six of these consortia already had experience of planning for Diploma delivery from September 2008 but the remaining nine were engaged in planning for delivery of these new qualifications for the first time. This chapter concludes the report by drawing out the main messages on how Gateway 2 consortia:

- were preparing for Diploma delivery in September 2009 and
- were setting up the infrastructure to support that delivery.

### 7.1 Preparations for Diploma delivery

Overall Gateway 2 consortia felt that they would be ready to deliver lines of learning approved to commence in September 2009. This was largely due to having ensured that they had involved staff with skills, expertise and enthusiasm for Diplomas and their specialist subject. Additionally, their readiness was the result of the hard work of line of learning leads, facilitated by having time to plan for delivery and attend relevant training and sharing ideas/practice with other consortia. The experience of these consortia in preparing for delivery indicates the value of ensuring that practitioners are adequately involved in the planning process so that they have ownership of this change also and feel fully prepared for delivery.

Preparing for delivery of the Diploma qualification presented some particular challenges which consortia staff would need to address before full implementation. These concerned establishing shared protocols, understanding and planning for the assessment of the Diploma, engaging employers and addressing the logistical arrangements, such as transport. Level 1 and post-16 Diplomas were not universally offered and the implications of this for young people's progression will be worthy of further investigation. Although there was some evidence of a broader additional and specialist learning offer than in Gateway 1 consortia, there was recognition that consortium-wide approaches to this would be beneficial if universally adopted by institutions. Consortia would also welcome clarity over funding to address future capacity, sustainability and employer engagement. Furthermore a wider debate might be beneficial with regard to the challenges of functional skills. It is recognised that young people might do well in other areas of the Diploma but might find functional skills too demanding. Guidance is also needed so that links can be made between functional skills and other elements of the Diploma, in order for learners to recognise the relevance of the skills and be able to apply them.

On the whole training and support provided were received more positively by staff in these Gateway 2 consortia than had been the case among the Gateway 1 consortia visited in 2008. Consortium leads were generally positive about training provided especially in terms of one-to-one support from consultants. Line of learning leads appreciated 'packages' of generic and specific training especially when the timing facilitated consolidation of learning. At institutional level there appeared to be scope for further training and support for careers coordinators and other staff from whom young people might seek guidance about their qualification choices.

The majority of Gateway 2 consortia had put in place a consortium-wide strategy for IAG, but it was not necessarily adopted by all institutions and there was scope for

more consistent IAG to be provided within a consortium so that any young person considering a Diploma received similar information and advice. Strong and clear communication from the consortium lead to the institutions relating to IAG and the Diplomas is vital to ensure learners across the consortium receive accurate, consistent and comprehensive IAG. Such IAG needs to comprise information that is effectively communicated to potential Diploma learners about the exact content of the Diplomas (in particular in light of the evidence that the qualification title did not always fully reflect the content of the course) as well as the learning approach. This should also seek to ensure that potential Diploma learners have a good understanding of the different elements including details of the principal learning, additional and specialist learning, and the project so that, with guidance, students can appreciate the breadth of the potential subjects within the Diploma and make their own informed choice. In terms of recruitment there was some emerging evidence that there might be a case for consortium-wide Diploma entry requirements at each level so learners had similar prior levels of attainment.

Consortia managers predicted that take-up of Gateway 2 lines of learning for September 2009 would be lower than was originally anticipated. This was said to be associated with an absence of comprehensive and consistent IAG for young people, the consortia continuing to work towards establishing coherent collaboration and trust between institutions and the strength of some current competing qualifications in niche areas. As well as understanding the Diploma itself, young people appeared to need more information particularly with regard to choices *within* the Diploma, and *concurrent* subjects studied alongside the Diploma, to address the emerging image of Diplomas restricting choice. Consortia might wish to consider how best to support this by, for example encouraging more flexible timetabling. Additionally, there is a need for further information for parents, so they can advise and support their children in making their choices.

## 7.2 Infrastructure to support Diploma delivery

In order for Diplomas to be delivered effectively a wholly new way of working is needed. The essence of this new way of working is underpinned by two fundamental principles:

- cohesive collaboration (a step beyond partnership working) and
- enabling young people in any institution to access a subject area or way of learning that most closely meets their interests

Key elements of cohesive collaboration can be argued to include:

- firm, flexible leadership
- clarity of vision
- effective communication at all levels
- widespread commitment at all levels
- trust.

Establishing a consortium of institutions and individuals that has all of these elements takes time and it may be unrealistic to expect a fully collaborative spirit to develop in the short term. However, ultimately this is what is needed to provide the supporting



infrastructure to deliver Diplomas. Consequently, all the case-study consortia have undertaken the first steps on the journey to fully collaborative ways of working but, at this stage in the process, they have yet to complete the journey. Ways to support these consortia and institutions, who are committed to collaborative ways of working, but need further encouragement and guidance to do so more cohesively, are worthy of consideration.

Preparation for Gateway 2 Diplomas highlighted the challenges of communication and consortia management as more lines of learning increase the complexity of delivery. The importance of communication was emphasised, as were firm but flexible leadership, clarity of aims and a commitment to collaborative ways of working. In the majority of Gateway 2 consortia there was less evidence of cohesion than had been the case among the Gateway 1 case-study consortia. There may be a range of reasons for this which could include:

- the possibility that Gateway 1 consortia were those that more readily embraced the change that implementing Diplomas represented
- that the introduction of Business, Administration and Finance in phase 2 means that there are now two lines of learning (Information Technology from phase 1) that some institutions consider are suited to 'in-house' delivery so minimising the need for collaboration.

If Gateway 2 consortia are more cautious in their view of working collaboratively, it may take time for Gateway 2 consortia to overcome some of the challenges they are experiencing and to identify the extent of any benefits for each institution, and for their learners, from working collaboratively. The evidence suggests that unity of purpose, rapid, but sound decision-making, networking in order to share emerging good practice, developing trust and commitment to the 'shared vision' would further enhance the future development of the infrastructure to deliver Diplomas.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The evidence suggests that although there has been some progress in preparation for Diplomas between Gateway 1 and Gateway 2, including the existence of consortium-wide strategies, a broader offer of additional and specialist learning opportunities and a more positive response to training and support, there is scope for more progress in terms of the processes needed to facilitate the delivery. The recommendations for policy and practice emerging from this research are outlined below.

- Thinking about ways to further support consortia and institutions to ultimately achieve a fully collaborative spirit should be considered. Firm, flexible leadership, clarity of vision, effective communication at all levels, widespread commitment at all levels and trust is needed to provide cohesive collaboration to deliver Diplomas.
- Enhancing institutions' understanding of the Diplomas, including the importance of the collaborative model of delivery, will help to gain their full commitment. This could be achieved through further dissemination of good practice and success stories from Gateway 1 consortia. For example, a common theme emerged from current Diploma learners that they liked the methods of learning and appreciated the opportunity to study a broad spectrum of different disciplines within a Diploma.



- The Level 1 Diploma is noticeably less widely offered and there may be a need to explore adjusting the Diploma strategy by for example, aligning it more with Level 2 so that guided learning hours are similar and the equivalent of a maximum of grade C at GCSE could be achieved thereby eliminating concerns over progression. Co-teaching could then be the norm and decisions over when to enter a student for Level 1 or 2 could then be made at an advanced stage of the course.
- As not all staff in institutions who may be advising young people about their choices appear to be equally informed about Diplomas, there is a need to ensure that all staff are informed about Diplomas (and the wider 14 -19 reform). Integrating relevant details about Diplomas into information that is disseminated to all staff at both a national and local level could help to achieve this. In addition, consideration could be given to including mention of the need to raise awareness in institutions of any Diploma training and, for example, providing line of learning leads with standard information about Diplomas to share with colleagues that is accessible and brief and can be easily absorbed by busy teaching and guidance staff.
- Some institutions are more reticent about adopting a collaborative approach to delivery of qualifications. Encouraging them to do so could be supported by increased weight being attached to 14 -19 and Diploma collaborative good practice in inspection criteria, so that the assessment of an area's progress in implementing the 14 - 19 reforms included evidence that all students were fully informed of all the options (including Diplomas) open to them.

#### Consortia leads might wish to consider:

- Providing potential Diploma learners with a good understanding of the different elements including details of the principal learning, additional and specialist learning, and the project so that, with guidance, students can appreciate the breadth of the potential subjects *within* the Diploma (and *concurrent* subjects studied alongside the Diploma) and make their own informed choice.
- Placing greater emphasis on the delivery of IAG in terms of: consistency across the consortium's institutions; improved articulation of the features of the Diploma qualification: the different elements and the styles of learning employed; and detailed information on the content of the different Lines of Learning. There would also be value in consortia identifying and disseminating the policies and entry criteria, as well as the views, of HEIs in relation to the Diploma (particularly to parents and teachers who often influence learners' choices) so that those young people who are considering progressing to Higher Education are able to make an informed decision about taking a Diploma<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> See Lynch, S., McCrone, T., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Evans, K., Golden, S. and Haynes, G (forthcoming 2010). *National evaluation of Diplomas: Experiences of Diploma delivery across Gateway 1 consortia*. London: DCSF, which provides evidence that some learners and parents expressed concerns about confusing messages from HEIs about their acceptance of Diplomas as entry to higher education, yet the first of a series of surveys of HEIs undertaken as part of this evaluation found that 18 of 19 HEIs surveyed accepted the UCAS tariff for the Advanced Diploma as equivalent to 3.5 A levels. In addition, most HEI senior managers and admissions tutors viewed the Diploma qualification as both a specialised pathway into undergraduate study and as suitable for a wider range of courses.

- Further supporting Diploma teachers by signposting and, where possible finding funding for, relevant training opportunities.
- Building further on the emerging cross-consortium communication and joint delivery of lines of learning by sharing good practice and disseminating success within the consortium to, for example, other lines of learning which have not adopted this approach or to schools who have yet to be convinced about implementing shared delivery.

These actions would go some way to assisting the full integration of Diplomas into the 14 - 19 learning landscape.

## Appendix A      Number of consortia represented in case study sample by criteria

Criteria	Number of consortia in sample
Numbers at time of sampling	
Government Office Region	
East	2
East Midlands	1
London	2
North East	1
North West	2
South East	2
South West	2
West Midlands	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	2
Urban/rural <sup>24</sup>	
Urban	10
Rural	5
Lines of Learning [note that all levels offered by consortia are represented]:	
Hair and Beauty Studies	13
Environmental and Land-Based Studies	5
Business, Administration and Finance	9
Hospitality	5
Manufacturing and Product Design	3
Number of lines of learning:	
Four	1
Three	6
Two	6
One	2
Type of Authority:	
Unitary	4
Metropolitan	3
County	6
London Borough	2

<sup>24</sup> Urban/rural/mixed categories were based on an analysis of census data relating to the number of homes in hamlets in an LA.

## Appendix B

The number of organisations and interviewees, visited across all 15 case-study areas is detailed below.

### Total numbers of case-study institutions

Type of institution	Number visited
College (including FE and sixth form colleges)	17
School with sixth form	15
School without sixth form	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>

### Numbers of interviews achieved

Type of interviewee <sup>25</sup>	Number of interviews completed
Consortium level strategic staff, including consortium lead/14 -19 strategy managers	16
Other consortium staff including senior managers, line of learning leads, IAG and operational staff (at institution level)	97
Year 9 learners intending to take a Diploma in 2009	98
Year 9 learners <u>not</u> intending to take a Diploma in 2009	85
Year 11 learners intending to take a Diploma in 2009	5
Year 11 learners <u>not</u> intending to take a Diploma in 2009	10

<sup>25</sup> Consortia staff have been grouped in this way as interviewees often had dual roles.

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